DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 023 780 24 UD 007 623

"Hemos Trabajado Bien"; A Report on the First National Conference of Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, and Educators on "The Special Educational Needs of Urban Puerto Rican Youth" (New York City, May 14-15, 1968).

Aspira, Inc., New York, N.Y.

Spons Agency-Carnegie Corp. of New York, N.Y.; New York State Education Dept., Albany.; Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Research.

Bureau No-BR-8-8048

Pub Date May 68

Grant-OEG-0-8-088048-3695

Note-78p.

EDRS Price MF-$0.50 HC-$4.00

Descriptors-Bilingualism, College Preparation, Community Development, Curriculum, *Educational Needs, Instructional Materials, Intervention, Parent Attitudes, Political Power, *Puerto Ricans, School Community Relationship, Self Concept, Student Attitudes, Teacher Attitudes, *Urban Schools

Identifiers-Aspira Inc., City University of New York, Project SEEK

These proceedings consist primarily of brief summaries of conference workshops on (1) teacher attitudes, (2) student attitudes, (3) curriculum and textbooks, (4) parent attitudes and community involvement, (5) the role of special efforts and programs, (6) preparation for post-secondary education, (7) positive self-identity and group life, and (8) public politics and community power in education. Two papers are also included: Frank Bonilla, "Education and the Puerto Rican in the United States Today" and A. Bruce Gaarder, "Bilingualism in Education: Its Potential and Limits" (condensed). (See also UD 007621 and UD 007622) (EF)

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BR 8-8048
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"Hemos trabajado bien"

A report
on the
First Nationa
Conference of
Puerto Ricans,
Mexican-American
and Educators on
"The Special Education
Needs of Urban Puerto
Rican Youth."

Sponsored by Aspira, Inc.

May 14 and 15, 1968
New York City

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FOREWORD

The conference on the educational needs of urban Puerto Rican youth was an important event for at least three reasons.

1. It was the first time that a truly national conference of Puerto Ricans had ever been held on the mainland. Puerto Rican communities in Buffalo, Boston, Chicago, Rochester and several cities in both Connecticut and New Jersey were among those sending representatives to New York, which was itself, of course, well represented at the conference.

2. It was the first time that the two major groups of native speakers of Spanish in the U.S. – the Puerto Ricans and the Mexican-Americans – had been able to meet together under private, non-governmental auspices.

3. It was the first time that leaders and students of the Puerto Rican community had been given the opportunity to confront directly and personally the cadre of teachers and school administrators whose assignments and interests had brought them into a working relationship with Puerto Rican children in the schools and colleges of metropolitan New York and elsewhere.

The atmosphere and policy proposals that emerged from the conference derived in large measure from these "firsts." They also derived from two related events outside the meetings: the struggle for community control of the schools that reached a climax during these two days in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Demonstration school district, and the efforts of the New York State Board of Regents (supported by Governor Rockefeller and Mayor Lindsay) to persuade the legislature to pass a meaningful decentralization bill for New York City's school system.

There was excitement in the informal meetings, some of which lasted well into the night, between Mexican-American leaders from the Southwest and Puerto Ricans from the urban Northeast, each of whom discovered in the others many similar concerns. One significant result of this discovery was a proposal to set up in the near future a central clearing house of educational information and resources for those concerned with Spanish-speaking schoolchildren throughout the United States. Another was the agreement expressed over the need for Spanish-speaking Americans of all derivations to speak with one voice in Washington.

Out of the confrontation between Puerto Rican community leaders and representatives of New York and other school systems there came a rededication on the part of Puerto Ricans to inculcate in their children, through education, a pride in their ethnic and cultural heritage. The leading proposals in this regard were for a renewed campaign to make bilingual education a reality for children; improved professional education for teachers; and, in general, an activation of the Puerto Rican community to demand its place in the politics of urban America.

The remarkable intelligence, good sense and poise of the Aspirante students, who so well freshened and illuminated many discussions at the conference, served as articulate testimony to the success of the ASPIRA program, as well as to the future of the entire Puerto Rican community. And in this connection, ASPIRA is currently seeking funds to provide consultative services to other Puerto Rican groups concerned with youth in cities where such groups are in the formative stage.

The link between politics and respect for cultural diversity was hinted at by James E. Allen, Jr., New York State Education Commissioner, who addressed a plenary session of the conference on Wednesday morning. After sketching briefly the efforts being made by his office on behalf of ethnic minorities in the state, Commissioner Allen made a very strong plea for decentralizing New York City's schools. Although the conference as a whole took no stand on this issue, either then or later, it was evident that most of those attending supported a far greater degree of responsiveness by the educational system toward the needs and proposals of community and parent groups.

In the pages that follow we have not tried to record every word said in the course of the conference. Rather, we offer here concise, readable summaries of the two major plenary sessions as well as the eight workshops. The summaries were written by a team of four recorders, each of whom was given a certain degree of latitude in the way he was to approach his task. As a result, there are minor variations in their handling of the workshop sessions. Most of the time, for example, the recorders chose first to paraphrase the paper read by the principal speaker at each session, but on two occasions one recorder chose instead to quote from the papers, while another recorder chose not to introduce the paper in chronological order. Professor Frank Bonilla's paper, read at the first plenary session, touches on most of the main themes of the conference as a whole; it is therefore reproduced in its entirity. A. Bruce Gaarder's paper on bilingual education has been condensed.

The Conference was sponsored by ASPIRA, Inc. whose chairman of the Board of Directors, Gilbert Ortiz, M.D., welcomed the participants at luncheon on Tuesday. It was supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation and the United States Office of Education. This report was produced under a grant from the New York State Department of Education.

Louis Nuñez
Executive Director
ASPIRA, INC.

"THE LOSERS," a special report by Richard J. Margolis on Puerto Ricans and the public schools in seven cities, was commissioned by ASPIRA for presentation at the conference. Single copies may be obtained by writing to ASPIRA, Inc., 296 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10001. Additional copies may be obtained at 25¢ per copy. Prices for bulk orders will be furnished upon request.

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OPENING PLENARY SESSION

Education and the Puerto Rican in the United States Today:

Speaker:	Frank Bonilla Professor Political Science, M.I.T.
Panelists:	Albert H. Bowker Chancellor City University of New York
	Leslie Dunbar Executive Director Field Foundation
	Vicente Ximenes Chairman Inter Agency Committe on Mexican-American Affairs Washington, D. C.
	Herman Badillo Borough President, Bronx

OPENING STATEMENT

by Frank Bonilla
Professor of Political Science
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

We have been called here by ASPIRA to work. Each of us has been called because choices that are ours to make can decisively shape the future of Puerto Rican children and our community. It is within our reach to make that future either more secure and fulfilling or even more barren of individual satisfaction and collective achievement than it is today. To say this is merely to emphasize at the very start that we are here because we care profoundly about the nearly 400,000 Puerto Rican children currently attending public schools on the U. S. mainland. But we are not here merely to defend the life chances of a small fraction of the millions of youngsters in American schools. We are here to defend the future of mainland Puerto Ricans and those from the island who will continue to join us. Involved as well is the future of the growing number of mainland communities where Puerto Ricans have settled and in which present trends indicate our presence will take on growing significance in the years to come.

It is that choice to claim a place in this or any other city in the nation – a choice that we have freely made as American citizens – that is basically at issue. Our discussions over the next two days must search courageously and without evasions over the full range of consequences that this choice has had for Puerto Ricans who have decided to make their lives in mainland cities. More specifically we must think hard about what this means for the thousands of children we have brought into a world that is hostile to them and that we now perceive systematically denies them the means of self-realization.

> Juanita was thirteen years old when her family moved to Boston from Puerto Rico. Because she could not speak English, she was sent to a special school. She was told that she would study English for a full year there and then, equipped with sufficient language skills, she would return to the regular school being only one year behind. Two and one half years later, Juanita had not been transferred. Nor had she learned much English. Her class contained adults as well as children her own age. She has not studied any academic subjects since leaving Puerto Rico.
>
> Felix is doing rather poorly in school. He eats one full meal a day. He is suffering from internal parasites and generally inadequate health care. In the classroom, he has difficulty concentrating – especially since his teacher is speaking a language he does not know . . . English. If he is lucky, his teacher will promote him to make room for next year's students. If not, he will go through the same ordeal for one more year, probably cutting at least one third of the school days. When he is fourteen, he will lie about his age and try to get a job as an unskilled laborer, but he will not have had enough schooling to properly fill out an application form. Eventually he may return to Puerto Rico or go to night school, his family will almost surely wind up on the relief rolls.

These cases are taken from the reports of students at MIT who tutor children in the Boston public schools. As is confirmed in the paper by Richard Margolis, it would be very easy to string out an almost endless collection of such accounts for almost any city in which Puerto Ricans are present in visible numbers. If I review here the highlights of the Margolis report, it is not out of a desire to embarrass the educators present here today. I am willing to believe that those here who know our school systems from the inside out are aware and concerned. But it is we ourselves as Puerto Ricans who need this knowledge most. It is we as a community who need to shake off the culturally ingrained unwillingness to face up to the fact that we and our children are the objects of indifference, prejudice and irrational hate. Unless we confront these facts realistically, we will neither understand nor be able to move toward a solution of the predicament of Puerto Rican children in the public schools.

Helplessness & School Failure

The nature of the predicament is simply stated by Margolis: Puerto Rican children learn less; they lose heart; they drop out. The COLEMAN REPORT on Equality of Educational Opportunity provides hard evidence that this predicament is not one that affects just a few children unlucky enough to be in schools not responsive to their needs. Puerto Rican children lag behind both urban whites and urban Negroes in verbal ability, reading comprehension and mathematics. Test scores of sixth grade students place the average Puerto Rican child about three years behind the average white child in all three categories of achievement and about one year behind the average Negro child. In the later grades, the gap between Negroes and Puerto Ricans narrows but the distance between whites and the two minority groups increases. The school neither teaches nor liberates. Relatively speaking, the longer a Puerto Rican child attends public school, the less he learns and the less he comes to feel that he has some control over his own life. Coleman then goes on to demonstrate the close relation between feelings of incapacity or helplessness and school failure.

"Every time I try to get ahead, something stops me." One in three Puerto Rican children – substantially more than those in any other group – readily accepts this as a capsule summation of their experience. "Good luck is more important than hard work for success." Here again Puerto Rican students are far more likely than others to see a reflection of their day-to-day lives. If so many Puerto Rican youngsters see their human environment as one that frustrates and rewards or punishes arbitrarily and unpredictably, the reasons are there for all to see. Mr. Margolis' report cites graphic instances of the resistances and rejections the Puerto Rican child meets in the school:

> José Gonzáles, a kindergartener, has given up trying to tell his teacher his name is not Joe. It makes her angry.
>
> A vocational student hoping to become an electrician did the same wiring job for four consecutive years – over and over again.
>
> A physical education instructor noticed that one of the girls was wearing a new gym suit. "Oh," he said loudly, "did the welfare check come?"
>
> A junior high school student was accused by his teacher of lying because he averted his eyes when he was speaking to her – a sign of respect on the island.
>
> A teenager told his principal he would have to drop out if he wasn't given protection from assaulting gangs whose turf lay between school and home. The principal referred him to a psychiatrist.

Coleman also asked high school seniors whether they had ever read a college catalog. Three in four white students, three in five Negroes, but only two in five Puerto Ricans had done so. Of course, by then the major damage to individuals and the desertion of school careers has already taken place. The number who survive this system is minimal. Because all of us who do so are statistical freaks, we are very conscious of the role chance has played in that survival. Because all of us have flirted with the idea of "dropping out" at many crucial moments along the way to whatever point we have reached, our sense of kinship with the thousands who continue to be drawn into some dead end is profound.

Margolis notes that many school administrators like to believe they have no serious dropout problem among Puerto Rican students. Some, pointing to the newness of our community, contend that the main body of Puerto Rican children is simply not yet of high school age. Others comfort themselves with the idea that the Puerto Rican children who disappear from their schools are not dropouts but transfers. New York figures suggest an accumulated total of more than 20,000 Puerto Rican dropouts who would otherwise have been attending academic high schools in 1966. Experience in cities such as Newark and others where the Puerto Rican community has had time to produce its share of teenagers suggests that the dropout syndrome is a common one. Margolis was unable to find any school system that had bothered to count the number of Puerto Rican graduates going into college, but he was impressed by the fact that in some schools the reply to this question was not a number but a name or two. According to a recent statement by a New York school official, about ten per cent of the Puerto Ricans entering city high schools graduate and about one per cent go on to college.

How is it that such statistics for Puerto Ricans in the United States lag behind the comparable figures for the island? How is it that, in the most economically favored nation in the world and within the most educationally committed and culturally productive region of that country, our children fare no better than those in the poorest countries of the world? Do our children really present such an insuperable challenge to educators? To what extent is our predicament the same as that of other disadvantaged groups in the United States and to what extent is it peculiarly our own?

Language and Learning

Some of the roots of our troubles and their peculiarity seem quite apparent – we are the bearers of an alien language and culture; we are confused by an ambiguous political status; we have in mainland terms an ambiguous racial standing. But we must avoid accepting easy definitions of our problems and leaping from such simple appraisals to quick solutions. How much can others do to help us break out of the self-defeating cycle in which educational failure is locking our young people? How much must we do for ourselves? We have been given bilingual auxiliary teachers, non-English coordinators, Higher Horizons and Operation Understanding. Are all of these just a case of too little too late, or do they fail because they misread the problem or see only a part of it?

Because it constitutes the most obvious block to communication between teacher and pupil, the language issue tends to dominate the thinking of school officials. Because Spanish is such a vital element in our cultural identity, we tend also to accept this primacy of language in the search for solutions. However, according to 1965 figures for New York City, about one half of the Puerto Rican children in the elementary schools are fluent in English. This is true of seventy-five per cent in the junior high schools and for seventy-eight per cent in the high schools. The sustained lag is allegedly mostly a result of children entering city schools at the higher grades directly from the island. Turning again to the Coleman study, we find that coming from a Spanish-speaking home is a disadvantage as indicated by test scores at grade one. But this disadvantage is small, especially if the home or the kindergarten has reading material. This disadvantage decreases after grade one. There is – in short – no hard evidence that children from Spanish-speaking homes do more poorly than others. The figures for Puerto Ricans in fact suggest that it may prove a long run advantage to come from such a home. By the twelfth grade, those from Spanish-speaking homes are higher achievers than those from homes where only English is spoken. The Puerto

Rican children who fall back in school may not be those in whose homes the island language and culture is most alive but rather those who have abandoned Spanish and have most assimilated mainland ways. The preservation of Spanish as an important language in the home may reflect family stability and continuity (for example, the presence of grandparents) or the cultural resources available to parents as a defense against the inroads of English as imposed by children schooled to reject Spanish. Plainly much research is needed to come to firm conclusions on these issues. What I want to point out here is that the problem is more complex than it may seem on the surface and that our concern with language does and should legitimately go far beyond the matter of our children's school performance.

Puerto Ricans on the island have been grappling with the language problem for decades. They have experimented with or have had forced upon them practically every variant of language policy. Their experience demonstrates the difficulty of teaching a second language effectively. In my view, it also brings out something that is of the utmost importance for all of us here to understand, and that is the difference between teaching a second language and education for bilinguality. If the island educational system had made a genuine commitment to bilingualism or even to effective instruction in a second language, we might not be gathered here. The system devised for the teaching of English as a second language in Puerto Rican schools is, according to an island authority, so well grounded in linguistic theory and sound principles of teaching that it has been adopted in sixty-five other countries, even though it is once more under revision for Puerto Rico. However, the last time a count was taken in 1965, only 909 of the 7,610 teachers applying this method had English certificates and could correctly produce American-English sounds. When there is that kind of distance between stated aims and the means to their achievement, I believe it is reasonable to question the genuineness of a society's commitment to the objective at stake. Unfortunately, this irresolution with respect to English has not been accompanied by a clear-cut effort to effectively defend and upgrade Spanish as a first language. On the contrary, indecision with respect to language policy has produced widespread indifference to the problems of teaching Spanish under the conditions peculiar to Puerto Rico. Despite the poor performance of the public schools, responsible educators on the island continue to sense a latent cult of English and an association of that language with quality education.

This ambivalence concerning language is a natural by-product of the uncertainties that have clouded the island's political status. We have no time to review that matter here. The lesson I feel we must draw from this experience is to recognize that the Puerto Rican community on the mainland must have clear goals with respect to language . . . a language policy suited to its true condition here. In my view that goal cannot be anything less than full bilinguality. It must also be made clear to all that this is not an arbitrary choice based on exaggerated ethnic feeling or attachment to a language and culture that have no lasting place in mainland life. We must not imagine that our pursuit of this goal is an imposition on an already burdened school system or a special indulgence to which we have no right. We need to be fully fluent in both English and Spanish in order to function adequately as individuals and as a community. Put more simply, we need to be bilingual if only to talk to each other. We need to be bilingual to participate effectively and responsibly in all the varied forms of community and political activity and organization that the cities we live in desperately require from their citizens.

For a Bilingual Education

Obviously, Spanish is at the core of Puerto Rican cultural identity whether in New York or on the island. Both the language and the cultural identity have survived against extremely adverse conditions and violent attacks on the island. Far from disappearing, this identity has taken on new vigor and meaning in the mainland setting. We are not asking for protection to artificially sustain a dying fragment of ethnic identity. The need for bilingual education for Puerto Rican youth in U.S. cities is dictated primarily by the special nature of our migration and the evolving framework of political and community action in those cities. The decisive feature of our migration in this connection is the fact that, whatever the net balance of movement in any year may be, past trends suggest a fairly stable inflow of new migrants. As decentralized political and community organizations become essential pivots of government in cities where housing patterns convert ethnic minorities into local majorities, the need for ethnically-oriented and – in our case – bilingual organization and leadership becomes apparent.

Signals that educators have already fallen into confused and contradictory thinking with respect to language in the newly heralded experiments in bilingual education here in New York are already before us. An April memorandum on the new bilingual school in the Bronx quotes the work of two psychologists in support of the project. Referring to bilingual education in Canada these men say:

> "...if there has been something like equal, normal literacy developed in the two languages, bilingual 10 year olds in Montreal are markedly superior to monolinguals on...tests of intelligence and appear to have greater mental flexibility, a superiority in concept formation, and a more diversified set of mental abilities."

A few lines later the primary goal of the new school is announced to be "functional bilingualism with English dominance." These are the ways in which educators seem ever ready to undo with one hand what they set out to achieve with the other. This means that we must examine carefully the actual intent and content of the various forms of bilingual education that we are being offered. It will not help us very much if the primary knowledge of Spanish possessed by Puerto Rican children is used merely as a gateway to English. This means also that we must try to understand the extra-school institutional supports required to make bilingual education a lasting reality. It means finally that we must resist the idea that Spanish is a handicap or a mark of inferiority and reject all educational programs that depart from this principle.

This focus on a language goal is vital to a solution of the problem before us, but it should not overshadow the more basic question of the general quality of education available to our children, nor should we allow these goals to distract us from the main attack on educational inequality. The predicament of our children is shared by thousands of other poor – black and white. Though we like to think that as a community we are racially integrated, our children are in schools sharply segregated by class and race. Since, referring again to the Coleman Report, the class and racial composition of a school is the single factor that seems most to affect achievement, and above all for Puerto Rican children, this is a matter of critical concern. In those New York City schools where Puerto Rican children are concentrated, black mainland children tend to be in the majority or to substantially outnumber whites. To me this means that the predicament of our children is inextricably bound up with that of the mainland black community. It also means that the mainland black community has a substantial stake in the solution of our problems and that we must manage to make them see clearly the nature of that problem. Though correlations such as those observed by Coleman tell us nothing specific about how these factors of class and ethnic mix affect achievement, we must also acknowledge that the present evidence fits better with the supposition that Puerto Rican children are further compromising the already bad situation of black children than with the reverse. For the moment, we are at the bottom of the heap and statistically it is we who appear as the villains depressing standards. Puerto Ricans must thus face up to the fact that our educational problems are one with those of black people and that solutions require joint efforts. This is not to deny the special cultural and language features that mark our dilemma but to confront more realistically its links to mainland racism.

Race in the Puerto Rican Community

We live in a society that knows only black and white. Puerto Rican complacency and equivocation with respect to race and even our more genuine accommodations of racial differences have little place here. As we have discovered, here one is black, white, or a non-something. Still Puerto Ricans – white or black – have little comprehension of the deep racial animosities that divide mainland Americans. Many are understandably reluctant to become part of a fight that is to them ugly and meaningless. But we cannot continue to pretend to be an island of civility and racial harmony untouched by the storm of racial conflict that surrounds us. Again we must acknowledge that our culture – like all others dominated by Europeans – has taught us to experience blackness as a misfortune. Our escapism and lack of realism with respect to race issues is as much grounded in such fears and self-doubts as in any affirmative principles of equality. If our approach to race is really more humane, we have to prove it here. And the only convincing proof of moral strength in this connection is to stand up as proudly for what is black in us as individuals and for what is black in our community as we do for our Puerto-Ricanness. We should be prepared to demonstrate convincingly that we are not just out for Puerto Ricans, that we are not ready to suffer any slight rather than admit that we are the objects of the same prejudices affecting black people; that we are willing to join the larger struggle to wipe out the effects of inequality and racism in the cities in which we live.

Until we make this decision to fight and to do so beside our natural allies – black people with whom we share problems most directly in the cities; other Spanish-speaking Americans with whom we share a language and a tradition – we will remain a furtive presence wherever power resides. It is not for us to fear or be put off by the aggressive drive of other groups to discover and act on their own truth and their own strength but rather to match that conviction and determination with our own. And without sustained, thoughtful, well-placed and very substantial power applied from within the affected communities, the schools will not change.

Mr. Margolis' account documents the surface generosity and openness to experiment of the schools and their underlying resistance and impenetrability. This comes as no surprise to educators who have long known that few things change as reluctantly as schools. In fact, according to 1964 calculations, the time rate for the absorption of innovations in education was typically ten times that in agriculture. I don't want to mention the number of years that, according to this research, are required for the diffusion of some new technique or practice in education. It will dismay you and there is good reason to believe we now have more efficacious means of bringing about such change. Still it is important to know that educational systems change slowly and so erratically because they try to teach but resist learning about themselves. While industry spends about twenty per cent of gross income on research, schools invest one-tenth of one per cent of educational budgets in studying their own activity. Only a small part of that can be regarded as systematic efforts at self-appraisal. In education, an "experiment" means not a controlled test of an idea but merely an undertaking that seems novel and has unknown but hopefully favorable consequences. Many such experiments are under way and many more will be concocted as solutions for Puerto Ricans. As the trend toward decentralization and community participation evolves, the responsibility for generating and evaluating new approaches will fall increasingly on persons who are not professional educators. If our influence is really to improve the lives of our children, we will accomplish little by substituting Puerto Rican myths and prejudices for the complacency, indifference and insensitivity of teachers and school administrators. We need not only to be clear about goals, to diagnose our situation accurately, to press our demands energetically, and to ally with those who share our predicaments – but also to cultivate a critical stance toward all solutions and an appetite for hard information about what is going on in the schools.

Two weeks ago, at a meeting in South America on the problems of the poor in the large cities there, participants were shown a number of slides of slum areas in Lima, Peru. Some of these slums were areas in a process of decomposition while others, despite the external signs of improvisation and precariousness, were areas in construction, where homes – however haphazardly put together – are constantly being improved. This has led local observers to talk of slums of hope as against slums of despair... a slogan that I understand has been quickly snapped up in Washington. But I was interested to observe in one of the slides showing a so-called slum of hope, a message inscribed in large block letters on a wall marking one of the boundaries of the site: LOS ULTIMOS SEGUIMOS SIENDO LOS ULTIMOS... The last still continue to be last. Puerto Ricans in this city and now in many others also continue to be last. I press this point because I believe that for us as for the squatter in Lima, this realization will not kill but fire hope. The fact that we are last should give us courage to press demands. It should help us put aside a misplaced deference for authority, an unrealistic idealization of teachers, the sense that we are intruders seeking a place where we don't belong. Because we are last we need more not less militancy – a stronger desire for survival, self-knowledge, purpose, and power. All of these can feed on the talk and reflection of meetings such as this. We have a lot to do. Let us get on with it.

* * *

The Discussion

The first panelist called upon by ASPIRA Director Louis Nuñez to comment on Dr. Bonilla's speech was Leslie Dunbar, executive director of the Field Foundation. Mr. Dunbar warned "against stressing the needs of Puerto Rican children alone," as isolated from Negroes. "Look at the larger picture," he said. "Urban schools do not know today how to educate children who come from backgrounds different from those of the educators' themselves, different from the line of vision of the teachers' colleges."

He backed decentralization, noting that "education is too important to be left to the educators. Education is not being accomplished in our urban schools." This fact has been on the record for the last decade, he said.

"You cannot impose professionalism from the top," Mr. Dunbar continued. "When that is done, it becomes identical with bureaucracy. A true profession comes from the people it serves." He also spoke against the colleges' "summer exercises programs" for "shining up the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Appalachian whites," and praised in contrast those colleges who actually take the kids, although they are not up to standards.

Dr. Albert H. Bowker, chancellor of City University of New York, said the number of New York City Puerto Ricans getting academic diplomas is "a trickle – several hundred only." He pointed to several special City University of New York programs that give direct admission to its colleges, and provide a good deal of counseling. The attrition rate in these is "a little, but not a great deal more than for the normal students," he said. According to the Chancellor, there are 3,500 Puerto Rican students in various colleges of City University of New York, though he later admitted that about half of these were evening class students. One major problem is changing admissions policies so that high schools will have less incentive for tracking and more flexibility, he added.

Herman Badillo, Borough President of the Bronx, said that "private enterprise isn't interested at all" in investing in housing or industry in the South Bronx, a Puerto Rican area. The "commitment of government is just about as low as that of private enterprise," he added. "Even where the case is clear, it requires a tremendous struggle to bring resources to this area, to get support to improve education." We "have to get a larger share of monies for underdeveloped areas that need it," he said.

Mr. Badillo expressed some concern about decentralization and community control. "Unless it is accompanied by additional funds," he said, "then the poor will be abandoned altogether."

He, urged a Puerto Rican-black coalition to get the majority support the poor need, to bring about "a reorientation of distributing monies."

Vincente Ximenes, chairman of the Inter-Agency Committee on Mexican-American Affairs in Washington, D.C. began by noting that "in California, there are three times as many Spanish-speaking inmates in San Quentin as in the University of California." (Only 400 Spanish-speaking students will be graduating from California Universities next year.)

Turning to employment, Mr. Ximenes noted that the liberal New York Times does not have one Puerto Rican reporter. (It has two Negroes, he added.) The employment picture is "very, very dim," he said. Among the business and industrial establishment, 43 per cent have no Negroes at the white-collar level, and 46 per cent have no Puerto Ricans at the white-collar level.

Mr. Ximenes said that for a long time, Spanish was considered a problem, not an asset. Only now is it being realized that bilingualism is a good thing.

Dr. Frank Bonilla, MIT professor of political science, amplified the statements in his speech on the need for a black-Puerto Rican coalition to gain demands. He spoke first for Puerto Rican identity. "We (Puerto Ricans) are looking for some kind of space to be in," he said. School decentralization-breaking up the city into smaller units-will mean more homogeneous units. The next question, he noted, is whether they will be able to put the units back together again.

It would be "suicidal for Puerto Ricans to be engulfed in a more aggressive group (the Negroes), with a more specific, firm philosophy," he said. However, he added, the Puerto Rican community is "not such a small, impotent group that it can't be a desirable ally – with its own identity – to the blacks." And, he noted that in New York, Puerto Ricans are in a good political position because of their numbers. Nevertheless, collaboration with Negroes should go only so far as they advance Puerto Rican aims, he said.

At the end of the discussion Herman Badillo returned to the theme of organization and said that because the Puerto Rican community in the New York area was scattered geographically, it was all the more important that they work together. He cited, as an example, such organizations as the Puerto Rican Community Development group.

WORKSHOP #1

Teacher Attitudes

Speaker:

Federico Aquino
President
Society of Auxiliary Teachers

Panelists:

Robert J. Havighurst
Professor of Urban Education
Fordham University
New York

Nat Hentoff – Author of
"Our Children are Dying"

Jules Kolodney
Vice-President, United
Federation of Teachers

Maria Gonzáles
Newark Human Rights Commission
Newark, New Jersey

Elliot Shapiro
District Superintendent
New York City

"Current research points out the serious retarding effect on the students of commonly held negative stereotypes. What are these stereotypes of Puerto Ricans? How widespread and how deeply imbedded are they? What can be done to change them?"

OPENING REMARKS

Federico Aquino

Can children who are considered "inherently inferior" and "unteachable" be successful in school? Not as long as their teachers think of them in this way, it was shown in a study published in 1968. However, when these same children are given dignity in the eyes of their teacher by being labeled "academic spurters," they show remarkable intellectual and behavioral growth. No crash program was used; no extra tutoring was allotted; no special enrichment program pursued; only an informal conference at which the teachers were told that certain children in the class were in some way special. (They were not, of course, any more special than other children; their names had been chosen at random.)

Interestingly, all the children in these classes made dramatic progress. But the unexpected progress of those not labeled "academic spurtors" was interpreted negatively by the teachers. Because they did not conform to the teachers' expectation these children were considered "disruptive."

There is evidence that in some slum schools, and particularly in the most disadvantaged areas, teachers spend far less than fifty percent of their class time in teaching. The bulk of their time is spent on discipline maintenance, performance of routine, and other activities which keep the class quiet but provide no instruction.

Language limitations (a fluency in Spanish not English) often land otherwise normal children in classes for the mentally retarded. And it has been demonstrated over and over again that the teacher's negative expectations are self-fulfilling.

The shocking statistics demonstrating the poor performance levels of so-called "culturally deprived," "non-achieving" Puerto Rican children bears this out.

The statistics show large failures in academic achievement of Puerto Rican children:

(1) a general retardation of more than two years in reading and mathematics at high school level;

(2) inadequacy in oral English at graduation;

(3) large numbers of Puerto Rican youngsters in the general (non-academic, non-vocational) course in high schools;

(4) an exceedingly high drop-out rate;

(5) a general negative self-concept; and finally;

(6) non-marketable skills among most Puerto Rican youngsters when they leave school.

I am not attacking teachers in general, or blaming them for all the evils of society. Many are, like us, groping for better ways to do their job. We should give our support to those teachers who are doing a good job. We should see that their supervisors give them support too. We should also see that they are allowed to be innovative and creative.

Educators, talk a lot about the aims of education, and one hears that the child must be developed physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. But actually most of our children are failing in most of these areas. Not only that, but they are being blamed for their inability to cope with the challenges by those who should be helping them.

In effect, what I am talking about now is accountability.

"What the teacher expects or does not expect and how the disadvantaged child perceives these expectations can influence, significantly, the child's aspiration level and involvement in the educational process." (Passow, Harry) The question is, what constructive steps can we take to remedy this situation. I cannot offer any pat answers, but I strongly recommend that we:

(1) Set up a Research Center for Puerto Rican Studies. This center would provide materials on the culture, history and problems of the Puerto Rican to be used in courses for all teachers. It would make classroom materials available which would be used to enrich the curriculum. It would engage in research and make pertinent research accessible to teachers, to help them develop the most effective techniques for teaching the Spanish speaking child. The center would involve and rely on Puerto Ricans to insure that the materials present us in the proper light, but it might be developed jointly with a university such as Yeshiva, which is already working in this area.

(2) Begin an active campaign in the Puerto Rican community to make parents aware of the educational deficits their children bring to school. At the same time, we would aim for better communication between the teachers, the community and the children. We should get as many community agencies as possible involved, and also establish a positive liaison with the United Federation of Teachers.

(3) Begin applying pressure on the Board of Education to hire more Puerto Rican teachers and promote others; and check to see that methods and curriculum for teaching our young are continually improved. The Puerto Rican Commission on Educational Policy, which is composed of representatives from agencies interested in education such as Aspira, the Society of Bilingual Teachers, Puerto Rican Educators Society, etc. is the ideal "watch-dog" committee which could present the Board of Education with the demands of a community united in their commitment to quality education.

(4) Make sure that teacher training schools require courses in social psychology, sociology and human relations, and see that teachers enter the field with sufficient time and opportunity to develop the skills and positive attitudes which are necessary to help all children learn, particularly the inner-city child.

(5) Make maximum use of mass media to counteract negative attitudes towards Puerto Ricans and

(6) Work jointly with Afro-Americans, Mexicans and other groups which seek to improve education for inner-city children.

* * *

The Discussion

After Federico Aquino's recital of education's failures, the first questioner asked if there wasn't something positive anyone cared to say about the schools.

"Yes," answered Elliot Shapiro, "efforts are being made to improve them, that's positive. Also the resolution made this morning to introduce a second language into the curriculum. What is happening right here, now, is positive." Shifting to a point which seemed to come less out of the conference than from Dr. Shapiro's professional reflections, he blamed the teachers' apathy and disengagement on their years of second-class citizenship. "I hope that now that teachers have a union they will develop the courage to engage in controversy and begin to act outside the school. You know, teachers have never mixed in the communities, not even in middle class communities. YOU ARE A CITIZEN, SO COME ALIVE AS A CITIZEN."

Dr. Shapiro noted that when teachers came alive their curriculum would get interesting; as they started to work in the community they would begin to understand and respect their students. In the meantime he hoped that the para-professionals would form some sort of a bridge.

Mr. Kolodney, who also has close contact with the teachers as their union representative, blamed bad teaching on the unrealistic and inadequate training, the large classes, and the "paper-pushing" principals who are not capable of giving meaningful guidance to their teaching staffs. "We must be critical of the school as an institution," he concluded.

"The school system has gotten worse and worse," Nat Hentoff interjected at this point.

Mrs. Gonzalez, a panelist, provided statistics and first hand experiences to support this.

Hentoff went on to emphasize the need for constant and vigilant criticism of the schools from the outside. "The worst thing that has happened is that the kids internalize the teacher's feeling that they are poor material."

A young lady from the floor quoted Professor Havighurst's question: "What can you do when children come from deprived backgrounds?" and asked if this statement from a trainer of teachers could lead to anything but teachers programmed for failure. Dr. Havighurst answered that it was necessary to get at "the facts." "It doesn't do much good to expect too much of the schools."

Citing the work done by Robert Coles, Herbert Kohl, Edgar Z. Friedenberg and James Herndon, Hentoff challenged Dr. Havighurst's "facts." Havighurst chided the Margolis report for not presenting the "facts" fairly, and dismissed Hentoff's sources, pointing to the difficulty which teachers all over the hemisphere have when teaching the poor. He said, "it's really not just a language problem, nor a question of racial prejudice. It's the damage which has been done by the time they get into school. We must spend what money we can get and the bulk of our energy working with the pre-school child."

"That is the essence of the New Determinism," Hentoff protested. "What about the street academies? In less than two years they have gotten illiterate drop-outs into colleges."

A question from the floor asking Dr. Shapiro to tell about the successes of the World of Inquiry ended their exchange. Dr. Shapiro described this demonstration school with a population typical of urban Rochester. Children are chosen with an eye to accurate statistical representation: blacks, whites, non-English speaking, rich, poor, fast and slow learners, mentally disturbed and physically disabled. The teachers are carefully selected, the classes are ungraded and small, they emphasize the discovery approach to learning, and a great deal of use is made of community advisors, community experts and community resources. Which factor or combination is the key has not been analyzed, but the recommendations which this workshop came up with, also inform the structure of this school.

These recommendations, first outlined in Federico Aquino's paper and almost unanimously approved by the participants of this workshop were:

Recommendations

- We need greater communication and increased cooperation between the Puerto Rican Community and the teaching profession.
- We need pressure from organizations such as Aspira, Forum, etc. to insure that more Puerto Rican teachers are hired and appropriately promoted, and that research and development leading to more fruitful methods of teaching our children is pursued.
- We must be sure that new teachers are exposed to courses in psychology, sociology etc. and that they be given the training, the atmosphere and the administrative support to teach ALL children.
- We must work more closely with the United Federation of Teachers for better communication.

With the exception of Mr. McFealy and Dr. Havighurst, who believed that the teachers were doing as good a job as could be expected, the participants seemed to agree that the failure of the children to learn would continue until teachers really believed that there were ways to reach them. They felt that teachers were unlikely to develop sufficient respect for children until they were forced to learn more about the culture and do more work in the community; that one very effective way of bringing the teacher and the community into meaningful contact was by decentralizing the schools. Another way would be to employ more Spanish speaking teachers and para-professionals into the schools. Finally, it was agreed that although it is difficult to change the attitudes of two groups who have grown hostile and alienated, it is not impossible. If teachers and Puerto Ricans work as equal partners toward the common goal of quality education – we might get quality education and as a bonus, a lot more "first class citizens."

WORKSHOP #2

Students Attitudes

Speaker:	Alfredo Mathews Human Relations Unit Board of Education New York City
Panelists:	Gloria Lopez World of Inquiry Rochester, New York
	Bernard Friedman District Superintendent New York City
	Herman Lafontaine President Puerto Rican Educators Association
	Awilda Castro Student, Aspirante
	James Gomez Student, Aspirante

"The impact on learning capabilities and the student's view of himself and his chances in life are decisive in his educational achievements. Puerto Rican youth rank lowest in self-esteem and aspirations. How do they actually see themselves? To what extent is their thinking ruled by society's low evaluation of their attitudes toward welfare, work, sexual mores, violence, and native intelligence? Exactly how is this affecting their learning abilities? What can be done about it?

The substance and atmosphere of the workshop on student attitudes was perhaps best characterized by an exchange that took place late in the two-hour session between a member of the audience and one of the panelists. The former – a young woman who is a junior at Brandeis High School in New York and an Aspirante – rose to ask Miss Gloria Lopez, a "World of Inquiry" teacher from Rochester, whether she was "really" a Puerto Rican. Miss Lopez answered that she was a Puerto Rican; her father had come to Rochester from the Island some 38 years ago. Her questioner was not satisfied with this, however, and asked Miss Lopez why, if she were "really" a Puerto Rican, she had earlier referred to her Puerto Rican students as "they" and had also spoken of "their" language. Unhesitatingly, Miss Lopez replied to the effect that the "they" had meant to imply the student-ness of her students and not their race or culture. But she did concede that her own background had been, in a sense, newly discovered. She had learned her Spanish in school, not at home; she had never known discrimination or prejudice, had indeed known very few Puerto Ricans until she found herself teaching them. Nevertheless, she said, she was certain she could relate to them very well. In the audience, a few people could be heard murmuring, "There, she said 'them' again"; and as she sat down, the young woman from Brandeis High School said softly, "I thought so, I thought you didn't really feel Puerto Rican."

Three Kinds of Puerto Ricans

This theme – how it felt to be a Puerto Rican in American society – dominated the workshop moderated very capably by Mr. John Valentin of Aspira. It was stated at the outset by the main speaker, Mr. Alfredo Mathews, an assistant principal with the New York Board of Education currently doing postgraduate work at Fordham University. In presenting the essensentials of the paper he had prepared for the conference, Mr. Mathews first gently chided the tendency of non-Puerto Ricans, including the Board of Education, "to link Negroes and Puerto Ricans as sharing the same plight and requiring the same solutions to their social ills." But not only must clear distinctions be made between Negroes and Puerto Ricans, Mr. Mathews said, distinctions also had to be made among the Puerto Ricans themselves. He suggested that there were three categories into which most mainland Puerto Ricans might usefully be grouped.

First were the "Puerto Rican-Puerto Ricans," "born and bred on the Island – in a sense, cultural and psychological visitors to New York; in another sense, economic hostages to New York's slums and factories. Mr. Mathews cited his grandmother as being typical of this kind of Puerto Rican. She had come to the mainland only because her children and grandchildren were here. But she had learned no English and had refused to adapt even slightly to the folkways of the dominant culture. Not long ago, in fact, she had returned to the Island and now lived in what her descendants had learned to call a rural slum. Yet, her dilapidated home was on her land, and she was happy. For the Puerto Rican-Puerto Rican, Mr. Mathews concluded, there is little or no confusion about who they are.

The "transitional Puerto Ricans," Mr Mathew's second category, have been in New York for a much longer period of time. As a result, "they are accommodating to American ways in speech, dress and other customs but [they] still staunchly assert their Puerto Ricanness by returning to the Island for a recharge of the psychological batteries, while at the same time evidencing more of the tourist in Puerto Rico than the 'return of the native' . . . " Mr. Mathews put his father in this category. He was a man who felt very strongly his ties to his birthplace and returned there often, seldom in fact coming back to New York without having first deposited money against the purchase of some property on the Island, where, he said, he wanted to live out the end of his days. But Mr. Mathews pointed out that the deposits kept getting lost, his father never did return "for good", and there was little reason to suppose that he ever would. Mr. Mathews suggested that the transitional phase was unique to the Puerto Rican's career in the U.S., since never before in our history had it been possible for an immigrant group to return easily to their country of origin. But Puerto Ricans can do so for a mere $45. This peculiarity of the Puerto Rican experience has costs as well as benefits, however. For if easy access to one's cultural roots includes the possibility of every now and then getting "psychologically grounded", it also includes the opportunity of never having to face the challenges of mainland life.

Nevertheless, Mr. Mathews continued, the transitional type suffers little of the ambivalence toward American culture and his own origins that characterizes those in the third category of Puerto Ricans, those whom he calls "the New Yoricans." New Yoricans make up the bulk of the Puerto Rican student population today, Mr. Mathew said, "and they may be more of an urban problem than an ethnic problem." (His own gang in the South East Bronx called themselves "The Puerto Rican Tigers," he recalled, but they rarely spoke Spanish and looked down on recent arrivals from the Island.) Still, these youngsters (and some not so young, like himself) constitute the real hope of the Puerto Rican community . . . as well, of course, as its despair. For, while it was true that the Puerto Rican was at the statistical bottom in educational attainment, a recent N.Y. Times article had focused on a group of young Puerto Ricans who, though still somewhat ambivalent about their cultural identity, nonetheless realized that "the ultimate job is to take on the system the way it is." On this optimistic note Mr. Mathews ended his presentation.

* * *

The Discussion

Mr. Valentin then asked the audience to form into groups of five or six and formulate amongst themselves suggestions for action by educational policy makers. But just as he was finishing his instructions, another young panelist, James Gómez, asked for the floor. He did not want the audience to feel that Mr. Mathews had had the last word on the New Yoricans, Mr. Gómez said. Then, with a good deal of eloquence he went on to argue that his generation really felt no confusion as between their heritage and their present status. He thought of himself as being, quite simply, a Puerto Rican who was an American citizen.

The first questioner in the discussion that followed the "buzz sessions" returned to Mr. Gómez and asked how he would mobilize the Puerto Rican community in a concerted effort to make the influence of that community felt in the larger society. In reply, the young senior at Brooklyn Tech, who is also an Aspirante, declared that he would first write off all those who were "over 40 at heart" and rely on the healthy self-awareness and pride of the younger generation. Mr. Mathews intervened to note that the older generation had to be credited for "leading the way." And he added that that generation was actually in the forefront of the fight for Puerto Rican rights in such conflicts as that at Hunt's Point in the Bronx. Yet he admitted that in many specific situations "the Puerto Rican population can be dominant, but it is also often dormant . . . . We need to make more noise."

Another questioner, obviously impressed with the poise and articulateness of the student panelists, asked Aspirante Awilda Castro of James Madison High School "where she thought she was at?" Miss Castro replied she had no doubt about it: "I am a Puerto Rican and always will be. But in my school, I used to be pushed around a lot. People would always ask me, 'Where do you stand? Are you black or white or brown?' I always tell them, 'I am Puerto Rican!'" Later, in response to a similar question, Miss Castro praised her parents for the certainty and confidence she felt with regard to her language and culture.

And she entered a plea to all parents not to take too seriously the demands for "freedom" that they heard from their children. She suggested that parents were, after all, the most important factor in a child's development. But she also said that she respected the right of her white Puerto Rican friends not to claim their Puerto Ricanness if they didn't want to – a remark that brought the only spontaneous applause of the workshop session.

Race and Pride

A more militant note of ethnic pride was struck by Carlos T. Gonzalez, a 26-year-old student at Fordham, who condemned the apathy of the older generation of Puerto Ricans and seemed to reject any kind of accommodationism with the dominant society. The young, he said, want to change the system and know how to do it; "the old folks don't want to, and we can't reach them anyway." On the other hand, he urged that the effort to mobilize them be made, and he suggested that the Spanish language radio might be the best means of doing so. One suspects that Mr. Gonzalez's rhetoric owed more to Malcolm X than to Aspira, which might explain why his speech was not well received by the audience.

Another student Aspirante, a girl who had attended only Catholic schools, returned to the subject of color raised by Miss Castro. She accused teachers of making people prejudiced. She said she had been discriminated against because she was Spanish-speaking, but this was just as bad as being discriminated against for being black, she thought. But she admitted that she didn't really know, because "as you can see, I'm white. What can I say? I'm white."

The color problem, Mr. Mathews said, was one that the Puerto Rican community had to face honestly and squarely. He recalled that one of his brothers had dropped out of school and become a drug addict. Was it a coincidence, Mr. Mathews asked, that this brother was also the darkest skinned of the family? Very probably not, he said, for even between parent and child discrimination often exists, with the "white" child somehow expected to achieve more, and therefore doing so.

The link between the identity problems of the young Puerto Rican and the social acceptability of his native tongue was addressed by Dr. Bernard Friedman, an Assistant Superintendent in charge of a school district 65% of whose students are Puerto Rican. He noted that far too many of these children grow up hostile to society, to their peers and to themselves. And with some cause, for the inequities of the society were readily obvious. He suggested, however, that one way of bringing the community together would be to encourage a thorough and honest program of bilingual education, and he went on to describe the program currently being implemented in his district, which was designed to do just that. (Mr. Herman Lafontaine, who was also on this panel, is to be the principal of a demonstration school.) But perhaps the most fascinating fact brought out by Dr. Friedman was that Negro parents in his district had shown more enthusiasm for the bilingual school than Puerto Rican parents. Yet this only underscored what Frank Bonilla had said that morning in his speech, and what Prof. Fishman would say the next day: that the Puerto Rican community has to know what it wants and to fight for it politically before there will be any real change in the system.

In conclusion, a number of concrete recommendations were made by panelists and audience alike. These were:

Recommendations

– for more workshops between Puerto Rican students and their teachers;

- for more, and more imaginative, use of the mass media to reach the whole Puerto Rican community, to inspire action and self-respect;
- for university intervention in teacher training;
- for a formal communications link between the Mexican American and the Puerto Rican populations on the problems (and solutions) of bilingual education. (It was pointed out that the South West development Laboratory and the National Education Association are both developing bilingual teaching materials.)

WORKSHOP #3

Curriculum and Textbooks

Speaker:

Carmen Miranda
Bureau of Curriculum
Board of Education
New York City

Panelists:

Mary Finocchiaro
Education Department
Hunter College, New York

Gordon J. Klopf, Dean
Bank Street College of Education

Teodorina Bello
State Education Department

Nida E. Thomas
Bureau of Educational Integration
New York State Department of Education

Anna Celia Zentella, Director
Basic Occupational Language Training
Puerto Rican Forum, Inc.

William Katz
Associate in Educational Integration
New York Department of Education

"It is a commonplace that curricula in history, social studies, and language arts virtually ignore the rich cultural, historical, and language heritage of Puerto Ricans. As a result, the student's sense of alienation from society is reinforced. Specifically, what might be done to adapt curricula and textbooks to make these relevant and meaningful to Puerto Rican students?"

To reach the Puerto Rican child, the schools need change in the contents, methods and techniques of the curricula they use, Miss Carmen Miranda, an experienced teacher and curriculum specialist in the New York City schools, told the workshop.

She cited the incident of a Puerto Rican second grader who was asked to identify a zebra on an achievement test. The animal pictured was completely unknown to the boy – there are no zebras in Puerto Rico. He finally said: "That is a horse wearing striped pajamas."

"Most of our teachers are conscientious and imaginative," she said. "They go to any length in order to reach their children. Yet their efforts are often thwarted by the lack of adequate material and the need to adhere to a syllabus that cries for revision. The result is frustration for the teacher and alienation on the part of the child."

The inability of the urban underprivileged children to find themselves in their books has given them a feeling of isolation, of despair, of ever measuring up to the standards set up by the model families they see in their books, Miss Miranda said. "The two greatest educational problems in New York City – slow reading and truancy – could be traced at least partially, to this state of affairs."

A survey of the books used in our schools, particularly the elementary readers, show them greatly inadequate and unappealing to underprivileged city youngsters, she said. Readings center around a white, middle-class, suburban family with no financial or social problems. "The father, a young well-built handsome man appears trimming the lawn or loading the trunk of his car for a family camping trip. The mother, slender, young, good-looking, bakes a cake in a Hollywood kitchen." There are two – at the most three – well-behaved children.

She asked how Puerto Rican children "could ever find themselves . . . in this set up." In contrast, "they come, as a rule, from overcrowded homes – usually tenement houses." There are a host of relatives who either live with them or on the same block, sharing blessings and misfortunes. The mother often works and the older children babysit. "Ill fed and ill clothed, they attend schools which are old, overcrowded and understaffed."

Miss Miranda named a number of more appropriate books now available:

- Living as Neighbors of the Holt Urban social Studies Series, which deals realistically with two city families – one white, one black – meeting the problems of the poor.
- William, Andy and Ramon, which makes a serious attempt to include a Puerto Rican child and his milieu.
- The Bank Street Readers, which show children of all backgrounds in modest surroundings.
- There is a Bull on My Balcony by Sesyle Joslin and Katharina Barry, published by Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., a charming, humorous, bilingual book dealing with Mexican customs.
- The Green Song by Doris Troutman Plenn, available in English and Spanish, which tells the story of a Puerto Rican frog visiting New York.
- The Violet Tree by Doris Troutman Plenn, available in English and Spanish, about a Puerto Rican rooster.

Miss Miranda explained that not all school books and materials should be centered around the Puerto Rican child and his world, but some allowances could be made. She suggested readers describing Puerto Rican holidays, or events more typical for the mainland youngster – "going to the airport to welcome grandma from Puerto Rico," the celebration of the birth of the last baby.

In addition, she said, books could include objects, folk tales and games more familiar and meaningful to the Puerto Rican children. Music classes could help by introducing a few of the children's songs popular in Puerto Rico, The social science syllabus needs revision to include Puerto Rican history and culture.

Right now, materials to aid the teacher are sparse, Miss Miranda said. Although the Division of Education of the Puerto Rican labor office in New York City is cooperative, their resources are limited.

"It is up to the educational agencies to set things straight," she said, to provide books, pamphlets, maps that could explode the myths that have grown up around Puerto Ricans.

Ironically, teachers of Spanish are often the worst offenders in humiliating Puerto Rican youngsters, Miss Miranda said. These teachers tell the students they speak a dialect, not Spanish – a misconception of the instructor. She suggested Spanish texts that center around Puerto Rico, not Spain – as most do now. "The Puerto Rican student must be given an opportunity to become acquainted with the works of literature of his fellow Puerto Ricans and thus, by association, to enhance his self image. The American student specializing in Spanish should be exposed to these works so that he develops attitudes of respect and appreciation for Puerto Ricans and their culture," she said.

In conclusion, Miss Miranda said, "The Spanish community through agencies such as ASPIRA should prevail upon institutions such as the State Education Department and the New York City Board of Education so that steps are taken to bring about some changes on behalf of the Puerto Rican students."

Her own proposals:

1. That Puerto Rican history and Puerto Rican culture and literature be included as courses in government financed colleges.

2. That closer communication be established between educational institutions in New York City and the Puerto Rican counterparts – Departamento de Instruccion and Instituto de Cultura Puertorriquena, so that mutual cooperation can be attained.

3. That steps be taken to import from Puerto Rico or to reprint here – to translate whenever necessary – outstanding books on Puerto Rican history as well as works of literature for use as resource material in the teaching of Spanish in our public schools and as a source of information for teachers and other school personnel.

4. That the curriculum be expanded or revised so as to include the study of Puerto Rican history and culture in New York City public schools.

5. That Puerto Rican music be incorporated into the curriculum on all levels of teaching.

6. That readers in elementary schools be more carefully selected so that their contents provide a familiar background for the pupils to place themselves.

7. That the home economic syllabus incorporate some Puerto Rican dishes.

8. That plans be made to establish a museum or a wing within an existing museum, where scenes on Puerto Rican history could be recreated in clay and other media, and where Puerto Rican artists could exhibit their works.

* * *

The Discussion

The workshop on curriculum and textbooks demonstrated – by the outspoken impatience with current practice and by pleas for new methods – the need for change. However, the direction to move toward – and specific goals – are still hazy, as conflicts between participants indicated.

Discussion was preceded by a brief statement by William Katz, associate in education integration for the New York State Department of Education. He said there is a desperate need for a school history of Puerto Rico, but two questions must be considered: 1) How to teach Puerto Rican history? and 2) Where in the curriculum it should go?

In the secondary school curriculum he suggested, teenagers should be made aware of Puerto Rican history, that Puerto Ricans have fought for freedom and security, that they have attained racial integration that the mainland needs to learn about. Study of Puerto Rican history, culture, figures, and the future should include its relations with the mainland, and a discussion of controversial issues affecting Puerto Rico's future.

Mr. Katz specifically pointed to a bilingual learning game now available as one hopeful tool. Like speaker Miss Carmen Miranda, he suggested the use of Puerto Rican material in Spanish courses rather than the accepted emphasis on Spain.

"Should a special unit on Puerto Rico be included in the curriculum?" he asked. His opinion was that a separate unit might be good at the elementary level, but there was some question of the validity of a unit that smacked of separatism in secondary schools.

He concluded by saying: "Let's get good materials in Spanish and English on our library shelves."

In the "buzz groups," participants asked each other why Puerto Rican students must start learning Spanish at the rudimentary level and waste a great deal of time relearning what they already know. "Why not restructure the first two years of the Spanish course with a Puerto Rican emphasis for these youngsters?" one man suggested.

Others suggested bilingual learning in science and math. But "where do you begin stressing English?" a participant asked. One idea: bilingual learning at the elementary level, then intensive English study in high school.

What Is To Be Done?

The first questions on the workshop floor: What is being done on a state or city level to restructure Spanish courses with a Puerto Rican rather than a Spanish influence? And what is being done to spare Spanish-speaking students from relearning the rudiments when they should be working on usage, as English-speaking students do in English classes?

Miss Miranda answered that New York City's Brandeis High School groups Spanish-speaking students in special Spanish classes, and the same practice has begun at Taft High School, where she teaches. However, she said, there are no materials for the special course, which makes teaching it very difficult. "It's very hard," Miss Miranda said. "Everyday I'm typing up materials."

Panelist Nida E. Thomas of the Bureau of Educational Integration, New York State Department of Education, responded: "To my knowledge, I don't know of the state doing anything to get Spanish taught this way."

Teodorina Bello, a panelist from the New York State Education Department, argued that many Puerto Rican students are in the college bound track or in Spanish classes. "We should be making the push on the elementary level," she said. "Curriculum and materials are more than books – it means talking to and listening to the children, taking them on trips, giving them experiences. Verbilization – speaking – comes before reading and writing."

Teachers meet shyness and some shame in their Puerto Rican youngsters, Miss Bello said. To overcome this, begin talking to them by using first the Spanish word – such as "sombrero", then introduce "hat."

At this point, Dr. Mary Finocchiaro of the Education Department at Hunter College in New York City rose to her feet to speak to the workshop, which she dominated for the rest of the session. In this reporter's opinion, her position, always well-stated, was that of the establishment educator – the automatic assumption of certain principles, the citing of work well done in the past, the need for more and better work of the same kind. At the luncheon immediately preceding the workshop, she had told how hard she had worked for the Puerto Ricans since 1940, admitting there was much still to be done. (She followed this up, as if in illustration, with an anecdote: Recently she had put herself out to secure a parttime teaching position at Hunter for a Puerto Rican who she knew was well-qualified to instruct in a particular course. Yet after all her efforts in this woman's behalf, the instructor had begun to miss classes. The reason, Dr. Finocchiaro said she had from a good source, was that since the woman wasn't getting paid enough for the job, she wasn't going to bother to come regularly. Dr. Finocchiaro shook her head over this deplorable behavior, "Would somebody else do that?" she asked.)

Dr. Finocchiaro went on to say that having empathy with the Puerto Rican children – helping them, giving them a feeling of identity – was certainly one theme, but in addition, basic skills must be taught "to get them into the mainstream of the school where they must compete with age peers."

We must reconcile the need for Puerto Rican culture, history, and language with the need to get the children into a competitive position for all curriculum areas, she said.

The panelist announced her strong disagreement with Mr. Margolis' position on the need for bilingualism. "We must ask of a 16-year old, 'Will this child be able to get on to high school, college?' ", she said.

As an educator, she added, the teacher has an obligation to teach the student in English, to function in an English-speaking society, to get a job, to fill out forms.

"I would talk about bilingual education with great caution, " Dr. Finocchiaro said. For six-year olds, she agreed with it. But for twelve year olds, she said it is a real quandry. "With them, it is widening the gap between the students and his age peers."

Dr. Finocchiaro then went on to speak of the need to focus on the problem at the teacher-training level (her field), warned against separating Puerto Rican children in the school, and wondered about the right age for phasing out Spanish in a bilingual program.

Mr. Manuel Gonzales, workshop moderator, then interjected that the chronological age seemed to be an important factor in the decision on bilingual education.

A woman in the group, who first explained she had been a teacher of non-English speaking children for 18 years, said one important consideration is: "What do the children want, not just what do we want for them?"

With fire in her eyes, panelist Anna Celia Zentella, director of Basic Occupational

Language Training, Puerto Rican Forum, Inc., then broke in to ask the workshop: "Do we know what our Puerto Rican kids are really being subjected to?"

"The fact is," she said, "that although Miss Miranda comes with a bibliography, and these books do exist, they are not in our libraries or are not being used in classrooms. It is too easy to lay the blame at the feet of the bureaucracy. If we want these children to be included, and for their schooling to have relevance, there are people in the Puerto Rican community equipped to serve as consultants," she said.

With a glance at Dr. Finocchiaro, she said: "Let's not get polemical. There are people in high positions who are not convinced there is something called Puerto Rican culture." Since this resistance does exist, she said, the question becomes: "Does it take pressure for inclusion of Puerto Rican materials in the curriculum?"

Making It

Noting the general failure of the Puerto Rican to enter the mainstream of society, she said: "A few of us make it. But the air is very rarified up here."

Dr. Finocchiaro came back: "You've got to have both empathy and know-how. You don't have to be Puerto Rican to do that." She warned against equating a good program with ethnic groups.

Mr. Gonzales, as moderator, broke in to say that there are "a lot of qualified people out there who are not being utilized" by the schools.

A question came from the floor: "Why not have Puerto Rican materials integrated into the American social studies curriculum rather than studied as a separate unit?"

Another followed it: "Why aren't the publishing houses represented here today? There's a hard attitude there." (The questioner was a children's librarian from the Cleveland Public Library involved in translating books for Puerto Rican youngsters.)

Gordon J. Klopf, dean of the Bank Street College of Education, explained that it had taken two years to find a publisher for the multi-racial Bank Street series. Most wanted to do an all-white edition for the South and an integrated one for the North, he said. "The publisher wants a guarantee of sale. He considers it a venture," he said.

A Miss Beatrice Lopez Pritchard then asked a question directed at Dr. Finocchiaro: "How can a child function in society without a pride in his own culture?"

Dr. Finocchiaro answered that "motivation must permeate the curriculum," that all the curriculum must "relate to the experience of the child," that "teachers believe this, but don't know how to relate it in the curriculum."

To a vague question from a John Keane, a teacher at Taft High School in New York, Dr. Finocchiaro explained that New York City is now issuing licenses for teachers of English as a second language.

A woman from Chicago then asked if the exchange of American and Puerto Rican teachers (called Operation Understanding) was to be continued, and was assured by members of the group that it was, although "neither country was completely satisfied and both were trying to improve the exchange."

Miss Zentella brought the wandering discussion back to Puerto Rican pride. "Is what he [the Puerto Rican child] is being capitalized on or a cause of shame, an embarrassment?" she asked. If it is an embarrassment, the Board of Education has something to do with this, she added.

Miss Miranda admitted that "kids deny they are Puerto Ricans" and said they "have to establish a sense of security, an identity."

"You can't separate acceptance and achievement," she said.

Manuel Sanchez, identifying himself as a former teacher now with the New York Board of Education, pointed out that often Puerto Rican mothers reject Spanish and pass this attitude on to the kids. "How do you overcome this in bilingualism?" he asked.

He never really got an answer. Miss Bello noted that bilingual teachers are not being well enough utilized in the program.

Miss Miranda said that "kids will reject their Spanish if they are told it is slang – then they will be embarrassed, not proud."

Recommendations

1. That the New York State Department of Education be allocated funds for materials from Puerto Rico to be translated, and distributed.

2. That bilingual textbooks be produced for primary schools.

3. That organizations such as ASPIRA provide funds to finance credit courses for American teachers in the summer program at the University of Puerto Rico.

4. That a Latin American Writers Workshop be funded for writing curriculum materials for Spanish-speaking students.

5. That the present Spanish curriculum be rewritten with a strong Puerto Rican stress in at least the first two years.

6. That there be a greater use of parents as a resource. (Puerto Rican parents and grandparents know songs, stories, dances that could be presented in classes.) That there be a push for greater involvement of the community in the curriculum.

7. A Spanish-American Advisory Board to evaluate all present curricula and textbooks at schools situated in areas of high Puerto Rican concentration. Make necessary recommendations directly to the Board of Education, not to local principals, since they do not seem to respond.

Miss Thomas, a panelist, also recommended, but not in so many words, the integration of Puerto Rican materials into the curriculum for the benefit of all children, not just Puerto Ricans. "You get the impression that we're not living in a multi-racial society," she said.

"Others, not just the Puerto Rican kids, have to know Puerto Rican culture," she added. "Others have to be listening. There is a need in all subjects, in everything the school does. The special focus in the curriculum is so that the end product will be a well-integrated person in a multi-racial society."

WORKSHOP #4

Parent Attitudes and Community Involvement

Speaker:	Father Joseph Fitzpatrick Professor, Sociology Fordham University
Panelists:	Frank Negrón Office of Education Liaison Human Resources Administration New York City
	Eugene T. Maleska Associate Director Center for Urban Education
	Mirta Ramirez Association of Spanish Speaking People of America Chicago, Illinois
	Louis Fuentes Principal, P.S. 155 Brooklyn, New York

"Active, effective participation in education is for most Puerto Rican parents a totally new experience, yet, their increasing involvement in school matters is viewed as essential to the strengthening of the community's voice in city and school affairs. What experiences in Puerto Rico and current efforts on the mainland are aimed at fostering parental involvement? What is the potential for enhancing their role in influencing present school system policies and in developing a more understanding and supportive role toward the education of their own children?"

The workshop on Parent Attitudes and Community Involvement was designed to analyze the role that parents can and should play in influencing school system policies of educating Puerto Rican children. Father Joseph Fitzpatrick, professor of sociology at Fordham University, provided a focus for discussion by reading a paper in which he argued that a family can attempt to exert control over an educational structure "on its own as a family" or "with the help of a well-organized, politically influential community."

Puerto Rican parents face serious disadvantages in trying to exercise either option. They find it difficult to communicate with school officials who do not speak Spanish, and feel uneasy when confronted with a bureaucratic emphasis on impersonal rules and a high degree of organization. Accustomed from their island experience to viewing the shcool as an extension of family life, they do not readily adapt to the need for more formal styles of participation in school affairs. And many parents, struggling with basic problems of survival, simply have neither the time nor the energy to concern themselves with what is happening in the schools. For all these reasons the individual Puerto Rican family encounters severe handicaps when it tries to influence school policy "on its own."

Nor can these same parents currently find collective strength in a well-organized and politically influential community. Whereas earlier immigrant groups settled in residential patterns which fostered solidarity, the current emphasis on integrated housing and the priority methods of selecting occupants for public projects make it harder for any one group to organize along ethnic lines. Furthermore, Puerto Ricans are only beginning to overcome a sense of bewilderment at the goals and tactics of a civil rights movement which had already gained momentum when many of them first arrived in the city. The example of blacks who have found new ways of organizing around their demands has now convinced Puerto Ricans of the need to define their interests in political terms. In the early stages of this adjustment process, however, they were frequently unable to compete with Negroes in the struggle for community power.

Father Fitzpatrick offered two suggestions for helping the Puerto Rican parent exert greater influence on the schools. First, he proposed the use of community advocates as a means of enabling individual families to communicate their concerns to impersonal bureaucracies. He pointed out that the Romans provided for the election of "Tribunes of the People" who with their knowledge and influence were able to intervene successfully on behalf of the poor against oppression by the wealthy and powerful class. Such advocates would be local community people in a position to hear about grievances which might otherwise never come to the attention of school officials. They might argue the case, for example, of a boy whose report card had been erroneously marked with failures, or children committed to the courts for excessive truancy "where it was obvious that the reason for the truancy was much more in the school than in the boy." He mentioned that the Puerto Rican Community Development Project has already been experimenting with the idea of having knowledgeable Puerto Ricans monitor the intake process at Juvenile Court, and said that the success of this program augurs well for a similar approach to communication between school and community.

Father Fitzpatrick's second suggestion was based on the premise that community strength follows inevitably from the development of community organization and political participation. He called for Puerto Ricans to define their interests in political terms and to mount political efforts to pursue these interests. While acknowledging that some goals must be pursued by all groups in a neighborhood, he stressed that Puerto Ricans also have particular concerns which they must press for themselves. Dr. Fitzpatrick used the argument that "one integrates from a position of strength" to show that such an approach by Puerto Ricans would not lead to their separation from the rest of the community, and it might even enable them to work more effectively with other groups in the pursuit of mutual concerns.

* * *

The Discussion

When Father Fitzpatrick had finished reading his paper, Anthony Santiago, director of ASPIRA's Brooklyn Center and moderator of the workshop, suggested that the audience submit questions in writing to the five panel members. The questions indicated that a few of the participants wanted to discuss further the need for community organization and political involvement. Panelist Frank Negron, former executive director of ASPIRA and at present a deputy commissioner in the Mayor's Office, quickly responded by saying that the whole nation has been built up through political involvement and that those who ignore politics do a disservice both to themselves and their community. Puerto Ricans, he argued, must get away from the idea of being non-political because it is only through involvement in the political process that any ethnic group "raises itself by its own bootstraps."

One group of participants felt that ASPIRA might better serve the community by reaching out into Puerto Rican neighborhoods rather than waiting for people to apply for services. Mrs. Mirta Ramirez, also a member of the panel and a former staff worker for ASPIRA, pointed out that ASPIRA does extend itself into the Community but said that Puerto Rican parents should not wait for services to be offered to them. Instead, people should make an active effort to learn about available programs and find out what Puerto Ricans have been accomplishing in other cities. In this regard she mentioned her own involvement in the Association of Spanish-Speaking People of America, a group of about 25 professionals and non-professionals who are trying to provide assistance to Puerto Rican children in Chicago. This organization grew out of the Division Street Riots of 1966 and has been trying to follow the example of ASPIRA in New York.

A majority of the audience seemed convinced that parents should play a more active role in school affairs and that the goals of community organization and political involvement were desireable. The participants wondered, however, what steps should be taken to implement such goals. Questions were raised about methods which have already proved successful, and several people wanted to know if Puerto Ricans should try to retain their separate identity or seek assimilation with other neighborhood groups. One questioner asked, for example, whether a coalition with the black community would be very helpful when Puerto Ricans started talking about the need for bi-lingualism in the schools.

Political Power

Father Fitzpatrick said that the Puerto Ricans could start to influence educational decisions simply by responding to the realities of political power. One has to be able to put people in office and get them out if they are not responsive to the needs of the community This can be accomplished by getting people to register, making sure they vote in all elections, and working to create a political environment in which one group can exercise control. He stated that a group does not always have to be a majority in order to exercise power; instead, it can be a "strategic minority" in co-existence with other groups not necessarily of the same party or ethnic origin.

Panelist Louis Fuentes supported these observations by reflecting on his own position as principal of a school which is part of the controversial Ocean Hill-Brownsville project in Brooklyn. He said that he had not originally thought of his job as "political", but had come to realize that his school is engaged in a desperate struggle for power. He emphasized that Puerto Ricans are indeed a crucial element in this struggle even though the district is only 35% Puerto Rican, and that Puerto Ricans are in a better position to negotiate with blacks than they ever have been before.

Mr. Louis Alvarez, a staff member of ASPIRA, spoke of the need for an effective coalition with blacks and said that the obstacles of suspicion and ethnic rivalry could be overcome. He described a program at Fordham University which has been created to provide training for educators of minority groups who wish to become principals. Blacks and Puerto Ricans were pitted against each other during the first year of this program because the 20 available openings had been filled with 15 blacks and only 5 Puerto Ricans. The two groups caucussed, however, and agreed to accept a 13 to 7 ratio.

Ombudsmen

One group in the audience had asked to hear more about Father Fitzpatrick's proposal that "advocates" be created to help Puerto Rican parents express their concerns to school officials. Panelist Eugene Maleska, associate director of the Center for Urban Education and former principal of P.S. 192, applauded the "advocate" idea and outlined a plan which would include such knowledgeable people from the community in the larger effort to build a unified and forceful Puerto Rican community. The Center, he said, was interested in finding a principal "simpatico" with community residents. Center officials, he said, would meet with this principal and propose, first, that the school be made available to the community in the evenings, and on weekends all through the year. A school-community coordinator would then be elected by the community to work with the principal and to train the ombudsmen suggested by Father Fitzpatrick. These advocates would in turn work with the leaders of individual blocks in the community thereby helping to establish a unified political organization based on cooperation between school and parents.

In outlining his proposal, Dr. Maleska commented that the Center for Urban Education would try to raise funds both from government and foundation sources, but added that the success of the plan would depend in large part upon the "tremendous desire" of the residents within the school district. This reporter asked whether the Center was actively reaching out to implement such a plan, and Dr. Maleska replied that the Center "does not want to foist anything on the community. We would rather see it stem from the community."

The Teacher Problem

Some of the participants through their questions gave scattered indication of what they would like to see changed in the way public schools deal with Puerto Rican children. One lady asked, for example, what could be done about principals who do not give bi-lingual teachers the freedom to perform their jobs effectively. Dr. Maleska replied that a strong community would have the power to force such principals to respond to the wishes of Puerto Rican parents. Another member of the audience expressed anger at the fact that about 95% of all Puerto Rican children in New York schools eat in school dining rooms and yet very few Puerto Ricans are employed on kitchen staffs. When asked about this, school officials reply that they are willing to hire Puerto Ricans but cannot find qualified applicants.

Mr. Fuentes agreed that more Puerto Ricans should be teaching in the schools. He complained that qualified Puerto Rican educators are now working in hospitals and factories because they are turned down by a Board of Examiners which asks negative questions such as "Are you sure that as a Puerto Rican you are a United States citizen?" People must begin thinking of Puerto Ricans as Americans, and this will not happen until Puerto Ricans begin actively supporting each other.

A community worker from East Harlem stated that ghetto schools receive second-rate teachers and principals who are failures at the Board of Education. These appointees generally turn out to be "slickers" who feign an interest in working with the community but continue to send children to correction classes and 600 schools. "Principals must be made accountable to the community," he said, " and there should be an instruction course for all new principals moving into the community."

These criticisms of present educational policies in ghetto schools prompted the participants to discuss the need for greater militancy among Puerto Rican parents. One member of the audience apologized for sounding "philosophical" but said that the present structure simply was not working. Puerto Rican and black parents now had no alternative but to attack this basic structure because their efforts had been wasted when they tried to work within the system.

Mr. Dennis Fargas, an employee of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, commented that Mexican-Americans also suffer a lack of political power and find it difficult to marshall forces within their communities. He said that the Los Angeles power structure received "reams of suggestions" from the Mexican-American community, which even had a representative on the local school board. But nothing happened, he said, until a group of children comprising over 70% of the student body in five schools walked out of school and refused to return until basic changes were implemented. "You want a tactic?" Mr. Fargas asked. "Back up the children who are beginning to articulate their dissatisfaction." He added that nothing gets as much attention from state, local and the federal governments as 600 children simply refusing to attend school. According to Mr. Fargas, similar protests have occurred in Albuquerque and San Antonio schools and will probably be seen in Phoenix and other communities.

At this point Mr. Santiago asked the participants to make comments in the form of specific recommendations. Three individuals offered the following:

Recommendations

- ASPIRA should develop a program for training leaders in Puerto Rican neighborhoods throughout the city on how to develop strong community organization. Such a program should involve "grass roots" people and might begin with parents who have already been active in the PTA groups of their local schools.

- Puerto Ricans should make a greater effort to involve school administrators and teachers in the activities of the community. Specifically, Puerto Rican organizations should invite school personnel to their meetings and to festivals within the community.

- A concentrated effort should be made to meet the need for more Puerto Rican teachers, assistant principals and principals. (This recommendation was offered by a teacher who said that her school had sponsored seminars and workshops for parents and teachers, but that such discussions did very little to change teacher attitudes.)

One further recommendation stressed the need for greater militancy:

- Puerto Ricans should sit down, refuse to move out of certain areas, or send their children to school until certain demands are met. In making this suggestion, Mr. Negron said, "I can remember talking about the same dissatisfactions as far back as 1958, and now it is ten years later. I am convinced as of now, at this moment, that nothing will be done in New York City unless we make demands." He argued that it is futile to wait for professionals to effect changes within their own system because such educators are afraid to speak out in ways that might jeopardize their own professional status.

WORKSHOP #5

Strengthening the Role of Special Educational Efforts and Some Programs of Promise

Speaker:

Antonia Pantoja
Founder, ASPIRA
Executive Director
"Adelante Boricuas"

Panelists:

Mario Fantini
Program Officer, Public Education
Ford Foundation

Alan Gartner
New Careers Development Center
New York University

Peter Buttenwieser
Director
Philadelphia Advancement School
Philadelphia, Penn.

Jennie Rodriguez
ABCD
Boston, Mass.

Karolyne Gould
Educational Specialist
Northeast Regional Office
Office of Economic Opportunity
New York City

A description and analysis of ASPIRA and other Hispanic-American programs and how they function – their staffing and school liaison.

Antonia Pantoja:

The originators of ASPIRA were aiming to change the following: The absence of Puerto Rican New Yorkers in positions of impact (policy making) in the private and public institutions of the City; the silence of the Puerto Rican community on issues, laws, services and in matters affecting its own life and the life of its members.

Only a very small group of young Puerto Ricans are coming through the education system and most of them leave their community to merge and get lost in the general population. In 1962, when the project opened its doors, Puerto Ricans comprised 2.5% of the professional and managerial occupations in the City, compared to 11.9% in the general population. This has not changed significantly.

Few Puerto Ricans go beyond high school or even graduate from high school with academic diplomas. Most drop out before graduating. Out of 21,000 academic diplomas awarded in New York City in 1963, only 331 were awarded to Puerto Ricans. There have been years when no Puerto Ricans graduated with academic diplomas in Boston, a city with a sizeable Puerto Rican community.

ASPIRA is an institution controlled by Puerto Ricans to solve these problems. It is not merely an agency to get scholarships for Puerto Rican youths. It is emphatically not an agency serving Puerto Rican youths who have made it anyway. ASPIRA and its objectives could be described as follows:

1 – An institution composed of Puerto Ricans to serve the Puerto Rican community by providing facilities, facts and information, staff time to pressure official bodies and mount compaigns – all focused on solving problems and acting on educational issues of importance to Puerto Ricans.

2 – An agency which is committed and able to help Puerto Rican youth relate, identify and function in the Puerto Rican community of New York. Young people who would never have taken an interest in the Puerto Rican community can come together here to learn, by doing, the techniques and methodology of social action for change. At the same time as they develop into politically active and effective people, through the fight for better housing, employment, better education and fight against discrimination, they are recruited and motivated to further their personal educational goals.

3 – ASPIRA's aims: To guide Puerto Rican youth towards professional, business and artistic fields, to direct them towards fields with promise and employment opportunities. ASPIRA pursues the educational and financial resources to secure tangible help for Puerto Rican youth.

4 – To bridge the gaps for older Puerto Rican migrants, helping them to understand the learning problems of their children.

Most important, ASPIRA is helping to bridge the generation gap which is even more serious for our people because it is compounded by tension between two cultures.

Although funds would be more available and many feel that we would have more power if we were to join with the black community, we are not ready. We are learning important lessons as we fight for better education for our children. We are developing political maturity. We must exist as a powerful group before we are ready to merge with others. ASPIRA is designed to provide the small middle-class Puerto Rican group with an acceptable way to work with his community, not only by donating money but by providing guidance and models for its youth. The middle-class Puerto Rican has been accused by many of abandoning his community, but no one else has provided a route for his return.

We believe that the total society can benefit from the culture of the Puerto Rican people. Our children are described as "culturally deprived" but we feel that we have much to contribute to the society. Not only can we be proud of our good race relations, but we are offering the city of New York another chance to become bi-lingual. Puerto Ricans can help New Yorkers to relate to the other half of this hemisphere by speaking Spanish as well as English.

There is nothing wrong with aspiring to be middle-class and we proudly admit that we are here to encourage the poor to get those rights – and benefits – of the middle class and help them to deal with the responsibilities, – and even the problems which accompany this status.

We are engaged in all these activities; but even if the only thing ASPIRA accomplished was to create an institution which served as a watchdog to ensure that Puerto Rican children received the education to which they are entitled, then it would have already performed laudably.

* * *

The Discussion

The panelists and participants of this workshop, interpreting the topic broadly, concentrated on ways to develop strong leadership in the Puerto Rican community, highlight the distinctive needs of the Puerto Rican community, get Foundation support to back them and use this power to pressure the Board of Education.

On the advice of members of the audience, buzz sessions were dispensed with and the panelists began with their prepared statements.

Caroline Gould, representing the Office of Economic Opportunity, said a few words about bi-lingual successes of the Head Start Program and turned the floor over to Mario Fantini from the Ford Foundation.

Mr. Fantini told of his experiences in the public schools as a second generation Italian. Provoked by the memory of shame and discouragement, he cautioned the Puerto Ricans in the audience to be proud of their heritage and show strength and unity when they confronted the Establishment.

> "The professional says that your children are not learning because they are culturally deprived! He needs this defense because he has failed. You must not accept this verdict. When you ask for effective education for your young, you are demanding a right, not a privilege, as some would have you believe. Nevertheless, you will need to use strategy to get it. It will take courage and careful planning."

He said that the Puerto Rican community should be carful to distinguish its needs from those of other groups.

> "You must meet the establishment and professionals as equals. Develop new leadership. You must aim for a wholesome confrontation with the Establishment, and become an energy source for the restructuring of worn-out institutions."

Alan Gardner, attributing recent legislation for the "so-called deprived community" to the powerful pressure exerted by the Civil Rights movement, described programs which are designed to help adults and school drop-outs. When OEO programs need food or carpentry work, unemployed people will be paid to provide what is needed. The vocational schools too will be allowed to contract with community groups to provide services. The Institute for Manpower and the New Careers Program are ways to train adults to quickly occupy service positions in the community.

"We can't be satisfied to wait until the six-year olds grow up. We must quickly develop a strong cadre of adults, and when these people get into positions within the power structure we must not desert them. They must be given the opportunity and the means to be responsible back to their community. ASPIRA does this."

Peter Buttenwieser's soft-spoken style contrasted dramatically with the preceding speakers, but his message was no less revolutionary. He described what he felt was the best way "to educate kids on how to capture power and what to do with it." At the Advancement School, roughly one-third of the time is spent on academics – the usual three R's, but utilizing modern technology and lots of physical movement; one-third is spent on groupencounters – sensitivity labs and psycho-drama; and one-third of the time is spent out in the community finding out how it really works. The kids plan and actually work at renovating lots and making vest-pocket parks of them; they tutor other youngsters in the community. By actually working at such projects, they come out knowing what the power structure is all about and how to manipulate it.

Issues of power and the development of leadership also informed much of the question period. When Antonia Pantoja was asked why she felt the problems of the Puerto Rican had to be separated from those of the Negro, she explained that not only were the concerns of the two groups different because their cultures and history were different, but that it was most important that they work out their own solutions. "Negroes have greater political experience and more power. The have built up a greater anger against the white power structure and they are impatient with us, because we do not feel as angry. The Puerto Rican needs time to develop his own identity and make his own mistakes before we can join the black community in areas of common interest."

The need to introduce the Spanish language and culture into the schools was of considerable interest to the workshop audience, and the resistance of the Board of Education to allowing teachers with Spanish accents to teach in the classroom came under sharp attack from the questioners. The comment from the audience that Spanish speaking parents opted for English (not a bilingual program) when given the opportunity to chose, drew fire from others in the audience. If such a choice is presented to people without official acknowledgment that Spanish is respected by the Establishment as a positive good, (the letter home offering the choice was even in English) it is natural that parents who have been made to feel inadequate themselves should conclude that the program would be inferior to the standard one. Parents must feel that they are really given a choice, that they are truly equal partners in the educative process.

A teacher from Hunter College suggested that ASPIRA develop a program for Spanish-speaking children which would make concrete recommendations for each age and each literacy level. "ASPIRA is ONE agency," Antonia Pantoja insisted, "We can't do everything and really we don't have the necessary money. We're offered grants for what THEY want us to do for all minority groups, but not to solve what we see as the problems."

Describing how she has worked on curriculum content while a consultant to the Board of Education in New York City, she recalled that after she has worked long and hard on a children's book about the history and culture of Puerto Ricans, the book was shelved. She even formed a corporation to publish the book – which was then very well received by the

Board of Education. "But it's been a year now and they have not yet bought the book."

"It's a trick that the Establishment plays on the minorities and we will not fall for it. You know, it really isn't up to us to work out curriculum. It's your job. It's the educators who have the responsibility to find a workable plan to educate children. If the old methods don't work, it's your job to find new methods that do."

"It's our job to see that you do yours!"

WORKSHOP #6

Preparation for Post-Secondary Education

Speaker:

Charles Bahn, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Psychology
John Jay College, C.U.N.Y.
Director of Research, ASPIRA

Panelists:

Wade Mack
Assistant Dean of Faculty
Skidmore College

Leslie Berger
Associate University Dean
SEEK Program
City University of New York

Jose J. Torres
Center Director
Neighborhood Service and Information Center #3
Rochester, New York

Carmen Dinos
Supervisor Educational Program
Department of Labor
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

S. A. Kendrick
Executive Associate
College Entrance Examination Board

While post-secondary education is essential for breaking out of the poverty cycle, preparation for and guidance toward professional and technical careers are beyond the capacity of the school system alone. How the schools, independent supplementary agencies, and colleges can work toward a realistic career preparation program.

Charles Bahn:

The fact that more than 50 percent of the nation's high school graduates now go on to higher education – the doorway to effective participation in our society – highlights the plight of the Puerto Rican. No more than two percent of the Puerto Rican mainland population passes through that door; no other group in the populous Northeast of this country is so thoroughly excluded.

Because only an occasional Puerto Rican went on to technical school or to college in the forties and fifties, there are now "astonishingly few" Puerto Ricans in technical and professional occupations in New York. Investigation has found among the nearly one million Puerto Ricans in the metropolitan New York area, some 15 to 20 mainland educated physicians, a small handful of engineers, not a single architect. In the New York City school system, 22 percent of the students, but less than one percent of the teachers are Puerto Rican.

A recent Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Study found that Puerto Rican participation in the major industries of television, banking, and publishing hovers around one percent – and this includes all employees – clerks, laborers, messengers.

If this trend is allowed to persist, or our response is for gradual change, "tens of thousands of young people will be further enmeshed in a cycle of poverty whose entropy moves with gravity, ever downward. It is not just that trained leadership will remain scarce in the Puerto Rican community, nor is it only that certain professions and occupations will remain closed. It is primarily that the alternative to upward occupational mobility is marginal membership in our society in the ranks of the unskilled or semi-skilled whose opportunities for a decent life dwindle each year."

"What can be done to bring about massive change that will bring Puerto Rican youth into post-secondary education in numbers that, as a bare minimum, reflect their proportion in the general population?"

"One obvious factor is that the schools alone have demonstrated that they cannot do the job. There will have to be an effective partnership built between schools, colleges and community agencies groups, working together and responding to each other, to begin such a process of change." (Dr. Bahn then noted "the tremendous resistances to such resolutions in both schools and colleges.")

The Survivors

To understand the problem, "it is important to recognize the deflated level of motivation, the despair, the helplessness that characterizes the dominant educational attitude of many Puerto Rican students." The survivors are few: in 1963, of nearly 21,000 academic diplomas granted, 1.6 percent went to 331 Puerto Ricans – less than one-fifth of those who had entered an academic high school four years earlier. And probably less than half of the 331 probably actually went on to higher education.

Dr. Bahn then described three patterns of achievement found among New York Puerto Ricans who had moved ahead through the help of higher education. Less than five percent belonged to the "early strength" pattern – youngsters with unusual strengths or talents so outstanding as to win widespread recognition and confidence while still in school. About 25 percent of the achievers fit the "fortuitous intervention" pattern, in which circumstance or luck had caused a fortunate change in the conventional deteriorating life pattern – such as productive service in the armed forces followed by the use of the G.I.

Bill. The rest of the survivors had followed the "long, hard road" pattern – getting through high school or college in twice the usual amount of time while holding shortrange, menial jobs, almost despairing, and then again beginning the climb to success. "Only the hardiest and most determined voyagers complete such a journey and they arrive at their destinations weary, cynical and older than their years."

Perhaps the most disheartening barrier to success is the negative stereotype of Puerto Ricans that induce expectations of failure. A name "Gonzalez" can make a junior high school guidance counselor stamp VOCATIONAL SCHOOL RECOMMENDED on a student record folder -- without even reviewing its contents – even if an 88 grade average is shown inside.

"Schools must provide remedial programs for those who have language deficiencies, particularly deficiencies in reading. Curricular reform, teacher training and other changes must be directed toward facilitating the progress of Puerto Rican children."

"Schools must recognize their inability to meet all the educational needs of this distinctive sub-group, and welcome the partnership of community agencies . . . share facilities and funds and not dictate procedures and policies."

Even with lowered staff/pupil ratios, the school cannot provide the needed guidance and counseling. This is where community agencies in particular should be "full-fledged, equal partners of the school."

Colleges must rethink "rigid admission policies, application fees, deadlines and cut-off dates, and standardized testing programs" which have become barriers to Puerto Rican and other minority students. The widespread academic tradition of rigorous freshman year grading to "weed out" the unfit is a major problem. "For the Puerto Rican student, the first year of college should not be a hurdle to be surmounted. It should include remedial and preparatory work as well as course work that tests his ability to do college level work. Standards do not have to be lowered; but neither do they have to be broadly and impersonally imposed right at the start."

Panaceas

So far, there has been a lot of pious talk and little action, a recent study shows, "with the exception of initial programs in perhaps a dozen colleges and universities throughout the country, such as the City University of New York's SEEK program. One not unusual approach: the total program of one New Jersey College of Education is a ten day tour of Puerto Rico, which includes a luxurious weekend in the Virgin Islands. Concrete and specific action is needed now by the colleges, in terms of commitments to Puerto Rican students. Indifference now may mean student body disruption and violence later.

American business and industry is another partner for this task. "Trade, business and professional organizations have an obligation to provide scholarships and other financial support to minority youth to prepare them for entrance into these fields. It is simply no excuse to say that 'we can't find qualified people in your group'."

* * *

The Discussion

The workshop on "preparation for post-secondary education" yielded an interesting – if frightening – fact. Panelists involved in the few isolated university programs to aid

Puerto Rican and other minority group students suggested and argued for radical changes in admissions and college procedures. But the representatives of a typical prestigious private college and of the New York City college guidance program showed that the establishment is ready and willing to continue its rigid patterns of application and acceptance in the face of apparent pressing need for change.

Harold Zuckerman, coordinator of college guidance for the Board of Education, put it simply: "We do our job. Our people are doing an exceptionally able job. We can produce anything the colleges want." His point: the colleges make the rules; he gives them what they want.

"The horror, Mr. Zuckerman, is that you do your job – in a system that's not working," Dr. Charles Bahn responded. "The rigidities of the system have to be deplored, not defended."

"Any group must review its function," Leslie Berger, head of the SEEK program at CUNY, added. "The guidance staff has not done so – you have provided services for the white middle-class society youngsters who basically don't need your service – who could probably do it themselves. You should redefine your roles, and concentrate efforts on the minority groups no one cares about."

But Mr. Zuckerman's "business-as-usual" attitude was underscored by Wade Mack, assistant dean of faculty at Skidmore College. Openly angry at his own institution and the others like it, he said: "We set the standards that Mr. Zuckerman meets." The Skidmore board has concerned, liberal people on it, he noted. They worry about the problem, but when it comes down to real action, they vote again and again against changing admissions policy.

There is "incredible inertia" about meeting the problem, he testified. After spending some time and energy traveling to colleges to try to alter attitudes, and finding that hard work brings little results, he has developed "an enormous sense of pessimism and discouragement" about any real change coming.

Skidmore has six Negro students and not one Puerto Rican, Mr. Mack said. "If that isn't lily-white tokenism, I don't know what is."

The workshop discussion began with a brief report from Jose J. Torres, a neighborhood center director in Rochester, N.Y., about the status of the Puerto Rican student there. The 2,000 youngsters in the Rochester public schools have the same problems, and get the same treatment as in New York City, he said. A 14-year old boy was recently thrown out of school because he was a behavior problem – with no psychological or medical check made first.

"In Rochester, the Puerto Rican is the victim of the dual educational system," he said. "Special classes" mean a closed door to the future, not remedial help. Only 13 Puerto Ricans will graduate from high school this June – of these, three might go on to college.

The first question from the floor came from Anna Celia Zentella, director of Basic Occupational Language Training, Puerto Rican Forum, Inc. She asked how, with the middle class in a tightening financial squeeze, colleges and universities could defend their efforts to admit and help financially Puerto Ricans and other minority group students, other than on ethical grounds. Was there a mounting feeling of "the white man's burden" among this financially-pressed middle class?

The SEEK Program

Dr. Berger answered that at CUNY "the most reactionary element in changing the university structure" was the faculty, which has a vested interest in maintaining standards. (CUNY's SEEK project has 400 Puerto Ricans, who make up 13 percent of its enrollment.)

He said that 30 to 40 percent of the SEEK students – who are not enrolled on any selection basis – are succeeding, although they were advised by their high school to get off the academic track.

Dr. Berger flatly recommended that the New York City schools abolish their counseling and guidance system, that they were just playing a numbers game with the student load, that no lowering of the ratio would make it feasible for a counselor to work with the individual student. "The black and Puerto Rican students always get the short end of the stick," he said, because by virtue of a black skin or Spanish surname they are most easily identifiable as not college bound.

Most college admissions people still recruit and select black and Puerto Rican students who behave like white students, who have good high school records and the "right" behavior, Dr. Berger complained.

The question is how to address ourselves to post-high school education for those with no past achievement, he said. At CUNY, he has found that "the best selection is to forget about selection."

"There is no magical tool to determine those who will succeed," he said. "Even those with past achievement are hard to predict, assuming continued behavior. Among those who have never done well, there is no criterion to pick out those who will do well in the future."

Dr. Berger also complained about the "incredible slowness" in making any change in the university, noting that CUNY had just made its first minor curriculum revisions after 50 years, and that was considered a major effort.

Dr. Berger's theory of non-selection was opposed by S.A. Kendrick, executive associate of the College Entrance Examination Board. He cited the case of Cleveland State University, located in the Hough ghetto, which with no admissions requirements except a high school diploma, low costs, and open places, still has a negligible number of minority group students. Administrators there explained that they get Negroes who stay for a semester and then flunk out.

The strategy, he said, is to select the best from the minority community. "Either you deal with the best, or you don't deal with the people," he said. He suggested a plan of offering an invitation to the best poor – whether black, Puerto Rican, white – to stay for four years at the college in a flexible program. Say to them, Mr. Kendrick added, "let's see what we can do – I know tests are a problem for you." Then go ahead and provide the flexibility in their education.

The real question is, Mr. Kendrick said, "can the universities deal with the best in the minorities?"

Standards

Dr. Berger responded that "there is no such thing as the best. That is something indefinable that one test doesn't determine." He spoke instead for the universities "getting their hands wet in education, not selection."

An ASPIRA scholarship program worker in the audience asked what could be done about the 30 or 40 percent of the Puerto Rican students who "aren't good-lookers on paper?" She also complained that there are too few (13 percent) Puerto Ricans in SEEK, considering the ratio of Negroes and Puerto Ricans in the New York City schools.

Dr. Berger admitted that the black-Puerto Rican percentages in SEEK were disproportionate, and didn't reflect the city population. However, the percentage does reflect the number of applicants to the program, he said.

Dr. Bahn noted that "many large colleges will make no effort" to better the social conditions "until the fire is burning at their door." This attitude has "both irrational and immoral dimensions," he said. "There's guilt involved here by the colleges. Those here at least are involved in some way."

He said that the old problems of the quota system don't apply in this case. "To say that we're not going to open our minds to quotas for the most disenfranchised group in society because of problems involved " is foolish, he added.

At this point Mr. Zuckerman rose from the floor to defend his college guidance department of 145 specialists. He read a description of a course from the Brown College catalogue – obviously a very sophisticated and rigorous course. "Sorting" must be done, he said. "The high school achievement level is an indication" of future success. "College is not high school writ large; it is a completely different experience. If college is defined as any experience beyond high school, then yes, open the door." But if it means serious academic work, selection has to be done.

He also explained the college success of formerly unsuccessful students as a "growth process" in which students begin to settle down and achieve after adolescence.

A teacher of Spanish-speaking students from Philadelphia spoke from the audience: "The Puerto Rican is not well-guided or counselled. When a Puerto Rican child gets into a junior high school, the counselor is not helping. He suggests: 'Get a trade – you'll never get into college'."

Dr. Bahn praised the success of the ASPIRA loan scholarship program, which in 1966 alone sent on to colleges and universities more than the 331 Puerto Ricans graduating with academic diplomas in 1963.

Mr. Torres suggested that it is "time for us to create a review order for counselors, to get some commitment from colleges that will come to the students in the early stages of high school and help prepare them."

Recommendations

1. That a detailed description of the SEEK program and others of its kind, including such information as cost per student, be made available to universities and colleges throughout the nation. (The recommendation came from Dr. Robert Saitz of ABCD in Boston, who feels that in his area, at least, the universities are ready and under real pressure to start seriously enrolling minority students.)

2. That para-professionals be trained to help counselors with their work load, to help solve the counseling problem.

3. That professional individuals in the Puerto Rican communities be used in recruiting students for universities and colleges.

4. That a Puerto Rican board of education be set up as a pressure group, to review practices and make recommendations.

5. That there be a redefinition of the role of the New York City guidance department. (Dr. Leslie Berger called for its elimination.)

6. That there be a coordination of efforts by institutions of higher education in a drive to recruit Puerto Rican students.

7. That institutions of higher education and their staffs work with the Puerto Rican community.

8. That institutions of higher education provide standards in harmony with the reality of student's ability – neither too high nor too rigid.

9. That teacher training institutions become involved with community agencies, and provide field experiences for trainees in Puerto Rican community organizations.

WORKSHOP #7

Stimulating Positive Self-Identity and Group Life

Speaker:

Elena Padilla
Professor
Research and Planning Division
New York University

Panelists:

Jose Aguayo
Research and Field Staff Consultant
Puerto Rican Forum, Inc.

Rafael Nieves
Association of Spanish Speaking People of America
Chicago, Illinois

Hector Riollano
Wilson Community School Program
Waterbury, Connecticut

Arnaldo Segarra
Office of the Mayor
City of New York

Nate Cisneros
Director of Program Planning and Development, Economic Youth Opportunities Agency
Los Angeles, California

Blanca Cedeño
President
Puerto Rican Forum

ASPIRA has developed a network of over 50 student clubs based in schools throughout the city. How and why this and other approaches toward developing positive self-identity work and their relevance to agencies seeking similar goals.

Professor Elena Padilla in her opening presentation chose to extract from her paper the theme that the Puerto Rican community would do well to join "the revolutions of our time." If it refused, it would give up any chance of achieving "relevance" to American society and the urban experience, and would find itself fatally "stumbling into the future."

Prof. Padilla seemed to be suggesting that the goal of "stimulating positive identity and group action", which was the subject of her essay, could be met only if the community eschewed all 19th century notions of assimilation. Assimilationism was the ideology of the dominant society, and a pernicious one because it held that the immigrant could not become an American without first sloughing off the culture, language and mores of his homeland.

In this respect, she said, Puerto Ricans had much to learn from the Black Revolution. "We have to effect major changes in our own society, if we are to resolve our problems of identity," she said. This means a refusal to go on being "docile". For, "if we don't do it now with this kind of militancy, we are going to miss out." And she felt that the time was never more propitious. "The country wants it (change); this is not a conservative nation.... We must do our share to accelerate the pace of social change. Minority groups as subservient groups must disappear from American life."

As many other participants in this conference had said, and would continue to say, Prof. Padilla emphasized that hers was fundamentally an argument for a deeply conscious collective commitment to participate in the political processes of this country. And the commitment should not begin or end with mere voting, but must penetrate to the primary groups of the Puerto Rican community and it must be expressed as much in individual striving to break out of occupational stereotypes as in group influence.

* * *

The Discussion

A flurry of hands appeared at the end of Prof. Padilla's remarks – so many it seemed pointless to break up the group into "buzz session" at that juncture. As moderator, Manny Gonzalez therefore let the discussion have its head.

The first questioner Mr. Angel Martínez, community organizer at ASPIRA Bronx Center, demanded to know what precisely it was that the Puerto Rican community had to learn from the Black Revolution: "burn, Baby, burn?" Prof. Padilla replied that the destructive aspect of the movement was really a very small part of it, that the legal and political thrusts were much more significant. Arnaldo Segarra, from Mayor Lindsay's office, noted that the blacks, unlike the Puerto Ricans, had achieved an undisputed relevance to American life, if only by virtue of their numbers. This numerical significance will never be achieved by the Puerto Ricans, who, moreover, present a confusing image to the rest of society. He pointed out that, "we seem to be sharers; we share our religion with the Italians and the Irish, and the ghettos with the Negroes." But he warned that Puerto Ricans would only be deceiving themselves if they expected to share anything else in this society unless and until they developed solid positions of group strength.

A member of the audience, Mr. Sam Betances of Chicago qualified this by pointing out that the Puerto Ricans had reaped many "profits" from black militancy, but that the Puerto Rican leadership seemed determined to overlook this fact. The Puerto Rican bourgeois, he alleged, was "seclusive" and forgot about the ghettos as fast as he could, except for occasional forays attempting "to cool out the militancy of the kids."

Mr. Segarra pooh-poohed the significance of those "profits". He said he found that Puerto Ricans always seemed to appear as an afterthought on programs designed for others, by others; although he did admit that the War on Poverty had to be given some credit for getting the Puerto Rican community together.

Throughout the discussion, a fear was expressed in one way or another that Puerto Ricans would suffer a total loss of group identity. Prof. Padilla several times reiterated the warning that the Puerto Rican might well simply "disappear", and each time a discussant suggested a political coalition with other minority groups (the blacks, say, or the Mexican Americans) another participant would rise to warn of the dangers of "absorption." Panalist Jose Aguayo, of the Puerto Rican Forum, intervened two or three times to wonder aloud where, on what issue or consensus, the Puerto Rican community would take a stand. Disappearance, dispersal, docility, these were the enemies of group identity and political progress, or so it seemed to many participants in this workshop.

Unworthiness

Mr. Aguayo suggested that all Puerto Ricans shared "a self-consciousness of unworthiness", adding that such might be the basis of some kind of consensus. But, he said, "we also need leaders and a proper spirit in the air." In this regard, he noted that the blacks "have been fortunate in their tragedies", by which he seemed to mean that martyrs were useful in maintaining group solidarity. But a number of discussants – notably a small contingent of teachers from Brentwood, L.I., the representatives from ASPIRA and some members of the Mexican American community – maintained that the proper and most effective guard of group consciousness and ethnic pride against diffusion and shame was training and the cultivation of Puerto Rican culture, including the Spanish heritage. This motif was expressed most typically by a lady from Brentwood who said, "By being good Puerto Ricans, we can become good Americans."

But there is a kind of pathos in this view of the problem which shows up in the means/end formulation. For if the end is to be "a good American", then the means have to judged accordingly, and there may be better (i.e. more effective, faster) means of achieving this end than being "a good Puerto Rican."

Be that as it may, several participants indicated they felt that the proper end of being "a good Puerto Rican" might well be, not "a good American," but a better America. Two women from Chicago appeared to share this vision when they pointed to the Puerto Rican slums as the real source of the spirit of change in the community. A consensus existed there, they said, "but we don't know it because we are too separated from the people. The people need change and they need leadership, but the leaders won't come. We are losing our people, and perhaps we don't care."

Miss Tati Santiago, an ASPIRA staff member, directly and passionately challenged the assumption that what Puerto Ricans had to fear was assimilation. This was phoney, she said, because everyone knew in his heart that "if we don't become part of this society, it's because we're not all lily-white, that's all." To her, the consequences of this were clear: the Puerto Ricans would have to "get down in there" with everyone else and fight for "their bit." We should be careful though, she said, because the "white power structure" had an interest in "seeing Negroes and Puerto Ricans fighting each other off their backs."

Language and Culture

Reluctant, perhaps, to come to grips with the social/economic issues raised by the two ladies from Chicago, or the racial issue raised by the Aspirante, the workshops returned to language and culture as a rallying point for Puerto Rican identity. And again it was suggested that there be a coalition with the Mexican Americans. However, a Puerto Rican noted that when an effort was made to work out just such a coalition in Chicago, the Puerto Rican leadership refused to collaborate with the Mexicans because they were allegedly too radical. Another participant put in that in the last analysis the problems of the Mexican Americans were too different for there to be a meaningful alliance with the Puerto Rican community.

James Meredith, the black civil rights leader, got up to speak toward the end of the workshop. He attempted to cut through the ethnic, cultural and racial questions to what he saw as the over-riding issue: who is to participate in the decisions affecting all the poor? What we need, he said, is "an Andrew Jackson for the poor of our time." "The rallying cry should be political power, a share in the decisions allocating our many resources, choosing our teachers and our cops."

Finally, however, the workshop was swayed to the views of two young Aspirantes – Mr. Eugene Barrios and Miss Digna Sanchez – who declared that they, the youth, would be able to forge the needed alliances, as, for instance, had already been done between the Real Great Society (a school of the streets in New York's Lower East Side) and Chicago's well-known gang, the Blackstone Rangers. Accordingly, the specific recommendations included:

Recommendations

– more programs concentrating on youthful Puerto Ricans, especially those in the smaller cities such as Philadelphia, to foster group pride and political action. (An Aspirante leader said this would be acted upon immediately.)

– a follow-up conference in East Harlem

– a National Youth Conference

In addition to these recommendations, Mr. Manuel Gonzales, ASPIRA Bronx Director, tried to encourage the group to think in the area of economic development, since he felt that this was very relevant in building up the positive self-identity of a group such as the Puerto Ricans. He was seconded in this recommendation by Mr. Segarra and other participants in the workshop.

WORKSHOP #8

Public Politics and Community Power in Education

Speaker:

Manuel Diaz
Deputy Commissioner
Manpower and Career Development Agency
Human Resources Administration
New York City

Panelists:

Michael Nuñez
Concentrated Employment Program
Bronx, New York

Louis Alvarez
Chairman, Puerto Rican Committee on Educational Policies

Armando Rodriguez
Chief
Mexican-American Affairs Unit
U.S. Office of Education

Dennis V. Fargas
U.S. Department H.E.W.

How the constructive energies of the Puerto Rican community might be mobilized to provide a broad base of support for raising educational standards. What information and skills the parent groups need to play an effective role in the development and follow-through of new and needed programs.

A paper by Mr. Manuel Diaz, deputy commissioner of the Manpower and Career Development Agency in New York City, served as the keynote address for the workshop on Public Politics and Community Power in Education. Mr. Diaz said that the War on Poverty has not been successful in dealing with the basic problems of the poor in Puerto Rican communities. Puerto Rican males earn less than their Negro and white counterparts and are unable to find adequate housing for themselves and their families. Puerto Rican children in the public schools continue to perform at levels drastically below grade level, and very little has been done to ensure that Puerto Ricans will receive full equality in the administration of justice in city courts.

According to Mr. Diaz, the War on Poverty has failed for many reasons. The original proponents of the program were guilty of overselling and false promises; the Vietnam conflict drained away the funds necessary for a full-scale battle against problems of housing, employment, and poor schools; and the potential strength of many programs has been vitiated by bureaucratic controversies at all levels of government. In many cases, specific efforts have not reflected an understanding of the problems faced by those whom the programs are trying to serve. Neighborhood Youth Corps graduates, for example, still encounter discriminatory hiring practices of business and industry, and Headstart children often fall back into familiar patterns of low achievement upon entering the "traditional" educational system.

Nor have publicly and privately funded Puerto Rican agencies been able to make an impact on the operation of New York's public schools. The basic skills of reading and mathematics are still not being taught effectively in schools of high Puerto Rican concentration; and this failure of the educational system has contributed to increased dropout rates, drug addiction, adult unemployment, and family instability. In the earlier years of protest the Board of Education denounced its critics as unqualified to pass judgment on the performance of professional educators. When the community continued to make demands, the Board responded with promises of new studies to define the problem but managed to avoid discussing the need for community involvement in the educational system.

Parent Power

Mr. Diaz argued for a strong parental role in establishing school policy by pointing out that community development as practiced internationally is based on three fundamental concepts: the community (or village) must define its own goals and provide its own leadership; professional and technical expertise and resources must play a supportive rather than a leadership role; all available resources must be used in a planned and coordinated way. The application of these same principles to the Puerto Rican community means that "We have to begin to do it ourselves, with our own resources, and with outside technical help."

As parents attempt to influence the decisions of school officials, they should be guided by several key assumptions:

- The Puerto Rican child can learn, and parents no longer need to accept the excuse that the language problem creates an insurmountable barrier to learning in the classroom.
- A strong pre-school program is the best way to keep Puerto Rican children from falling below grade level.
- Reading is the key to learning, and if a child can best develop his reading skills in Spanish he should be taught in this language.

- A teacher who thinks his pupils cannot learn will very often succeed in convincing them that they cannot. (Thus the entire atmosphere of many schools and classrooms must be changed.)
- Teachers can work more effectively when they have the support of parents and community, and greater rapport might exist if teachers could be encouraged to live in areas where they teach.
- Parents must have a role in the key decision-making process in areas which affect curriculum, selection of personnel, and methods of organization.
- Sufficient resources must be forthcoming if the schools are to accomplish their stated aims.

Mr. Diaz underscored the need for a partnership between school and community by describing what happens when such cooperation does not exist. Student achievement levels fall when a community does not accept its share of the responsibility for student learning. If parents do not take an interest in school affairs, the entire system because isolated and subsequently unresponsive to the needs of the community. Both groups hurl accusations at each other and the resulting tensions make it impossible for either parents or school officials to work constructively toward the goal of providing quality education for all children.

Although the War on Poverty has failed to achieve its objectives, it has encouraged communities to start drawing upon their own resources. Parents concerned with the quality of schools must now build upon the community strength that already exists and mobilize in support of proposals that will enable parents to work more closely with school officials. Only through the exercise of political power can Puerto Ricans be sure that a decentralization plan will pass and bills such as the Bi-lingual Education Act will not be emasculated by a Congress that seems remarkably unresponsive to the needs of the Puerto Rican community.

* * *

The Discussion

Most of the participants in the workshop accepted without question Mr. Diaz's assertions about the need for community organization and the development of political strength among Puerto Ricans. They were eager to discuss the best ways of mobilizing Puerto Ricans into a power group that might force some long-overdue changes in the New York City educational establishment, and vigorously debated various reasons why efforts in this direction have so far been largely unsuccessful. Some accused Puerto Rican leaders of failing to confront the Board of Education with specific demands, but for the most part did not choose to discuss what these demands should be. Others felt that the time had come to stop explaining to parents what the Board of Education is trying to do and start appealing to the Puerto Rican community on an emotional level.

A worker for Catholic Charities opened the discussion by commenting that Mr. Diaz had talked about political power and the organization of parents but that Puerto Rican parents seemed much less responsive than Negroes to such ideas. He asked for specific suggestions on how one might persuade a mother on welfare with six children, for example, to take an active interest in issues which concerned the entire community.

Panelist Louis Alvarez, a staff member of ASPIRA and chairman of the Puerto Rican Committee on Educational Policies, answered that appealing to ethnicity is one of the best ways to organize a community. He also stressed the need for highly visible goals which have been formulated by parents rather than by outside organizers.

Father Joseph Fitzpatrick, professor of sociology at Fordham University, implied that it was premature to discuss the problem of community organization until one first realized that individual families do not all have the same needs. Some parents are alert, well-informed, and able to move children effectively through the school system. Others want to take an active interest but do not have sufficient information on what is happening in the schools. Some are bewildered by the size of the school bureaucracy and by the impersonality of school officials – they need a program of basic orientation. And, finally, there are parents so busy trying to survive that they do not have the time to become involved in educational issues. According to Father Fitzpatrick, one could probably devise about twelve different levels of parents, but regardless of the number it was clear that community leaders had to act in different ways with each level.

The Middle Class

Mr. Diaz redefined the above categories in terms of class structure, and argued that there already exists a growing middle class which is rapidly learning how to maneuver its way through the system. He said that lower-income families are the least likely to become involved in school problems because they are the victims of gaps in information, organization, and the ability to define the important issues affecting their children. They also tend too often to be submissive to authority, and this characteristic, according to Mr. Diaz, means that as "we go out and try to organize, we must find the delicate line between providing direct leadership where people follow the Pied Piper in a crowd behind him and the method of having the initiative coming from the community."

A staff member of ASPIRA immediately questioned the assumption of a rising middle class, criticized those few Puerto Ricans who have achieved middle class status for failing to play a leadership role in ghetto communities, and argued that the only way to interest the lowest-income families in school matters is to appeal to them on an emotional level. (At the end of the discussion this same speaker defined the term "emotional appeal" as that approach which "deals with problems in such a way that people can respond to them.")

These observations set the stage for a discussion about the need for increased militancy on the part of Puerto Rican leaders. When one member of the audience said that in about 25 years most Puerto Ricans would probably have forgotten that they were Puerto Rican, a teacher from Boston commented that the school system in that city was trying to "Anglicize" all its pupils. She called upon Puerto Ricans to stop holding meetings and start following the example of black militants who have identified their problems and begun to confront them with direct action. Puerto Ricans too must organize their neighborhoods and force their demands upon the professional system.

Mr. Louis Mercado, a teacher at P.S. 134 in New York, reported that the leaders of Brooklyn CORE cannot understand why the Puerto Rican leadership does not push more vigorously for clearly-defined goals. "We are too willing to accept tokenism," he said, "The Puerto Rican leadership that has developed is not leading. I accuse Puerto Ricans of not defining sound goals and working toward them so that the blacks will work with us." (He offered two specific aims which might be adapted by community leaders: changes in curriculum to make it more relevant to the needs of Puerto Rican children and the hiring of more Puerto Rican teachers and administrators.)

A heated discussion ensued about who leaders are and what role they should play. Mr. Michael Nuñez, a panel member and coordinator of the Concentrated Employment Program in New York City, rejected the notion that a few individuals were responsible for the present impotence of the Puerto Rican community. He said that everyone in the workshop was a potential leader and that all had been guilty of not supporting political representatives of Puerto Rican neighborhoods. How many of you can call up your congressman, or even know who he is? What political club do you belong to?" he asked. Mr. Mercado replied that this kind of answer simply underscored the penchant that Puerto Ricans have for criticizing their own professionals.

Panelist Dennis Fargas of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, returned to the question of group consciousness. As director of the manpower program in Los Angeles, he had found the War on Poverty to be a difficult program to administer but felt that it was at least partly responsible for the emergence of a new power base within Mexican-American communities. An increasing number of Mexican-Americans were no longer passively accepting conditions around them and had begun to direct their outrage at their own middle-class.

"They want emotional leadership," he said, "and this is good, but there is no need for such devisiveness. People have accused me of selling out and ask me how much I earn. Instead of pointing fingers, can we accept that each in our own way is working toward the same goal? Can we have confidence in each other? Can we develop common tactics and common strategies? What are we really interested in – destroying each other in mutual recrimination?"

To Work Within For Change?

Some of the participants implied that it was easy to speak of the need for unity but that people still had to decide whether they wanted to work within or outside the system. One Negro woman said that the trend was moving toward direct appeals to the community. Even Whitney Young was finding that he had to do more than negotiate with business leaders in their offices if he wanted to obtain more jobs for Negroes. A Puerto Rican from Boston said he had decided that no solutions would be found by holding more conferences. He commented that he was ashamed to be an American citizen because all laws are stacked against Puerto Ricans. "We can't get anything from a system that listens for a while and then throws the papers in the wastebasket," he said. "The blacks have gotten money for what they need by rioting."

Mr. Armando Rodriguez, a panel member and chief of the Mexican-American Affairs Unit in the U.S. Office of Education, returned to the need for Puerto Ricans to make an impact on the system by operating through political means, but his remarks carried a sense of urgency not present in the earlier discussion of this issue. He said that individuals do not have to wait for a community to be united before they start pressing their demands. "We're all leaders," he said, "and if you are right, the people will go with you. We must be fluid, flexible, and start moving." Some people can only be reached by logic, others by emotion, and the rest must be continually prodded. Mr. Rodriguez chided the church for having failed to provide political leadership and said that individuals should stop waiting for traditional institutions to lead the fight for improvements in such areas as public school education.

These comments prompted a lady from California to ask about the possibilities of an effective political coalition between Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans. Mr. Rodriguez replied that the Mexican-American has for too long been identified by Congress as exclusively a southwestern problem, an identification which is blind to the fact that Mexican-Americans exist in large numbers throughout the country. He said that a coalition would be extremely helpful in the attempt to gain political support for all Latins on a national basis. Panelist Louis Alvarez added that steps are already being taken to develop such a coalition. He stressed, however, that before they could contribute to any coalition Puerto Ricans would have to start casting off a colonial mentality which has pacified them for the last 500 years.

At this point Moderator Anthony Santiago, director of the ASPIRA center in Brooklyn, asked the participants to formulate some specific recommendations for inclusion in the final report of the conference. Individuals suggested the following:

Recommendations

- The formation of a group of leaders from Puerto Rican agencies on a city-wide level to plan strategy for increasing the involvement of Puerto Ricans in the areas of education and economic development. A variation on this plan was also proposed: the city-wide group should break New York into sections of potential Puerto Rican strength; a steering committee would then organize each of these sections and direct them to "boycott and disrupt the public school system."
- The creation of a "watchdog committee" composed of "grass roots people" to report on the legislative status of bill affecting the Puerto Rican community.
- The formation by ASPIRA of a group called "The Committee for the Employment of 10,000 Puerto Rican Teachers in New York Public Schools."
- The gathering of a committee to study further the idea of a nationwide coalition of Spanish-speaking Americans.
- Greater efforts in all cities to register Puerto Rican voters. A woman described how Puerto Ricans in Cleveland had started a Spanish-American Democratic Committee which in less than two years had registered over 3,000 Spanish and Puerto Rican voters. She reported that "This year we didn't have to go to the candidates. They came to us and said, 'This is what we are going to do for you.'"
- A member of the audience proposed that the entire panel endorse a plan for school decentralization in New York City and recommend that the conference as a whole do the same thing. No vote was taken by the panel, perhaps because individual panel members were undecided about the merits of the various compromise proposals pending before the legislature. The general suggestion of panel endorsement received wide-spread support from the workshop participants, however, and panelist Louis Alvarez said he found it interesting that the highest Puerto Rican official in the city [Mr. Diaz] was not supporting decentralization. "We should oppose our own leaders on this question," he said.

2

CLOSING PLENARY SESSION

Bilingualism in Education – Its Potential and Its Limits

Speaker:

A. Bruce Gaarder
U.S. Office of Education

Panelists:

Frank Cordasco
Professor, Education
Montclair, State Teachers College
Montclair, New Jersey

Francis Keppel
President
General Learning Corp.

Joshua Fishman
Research Professor, Social Science
Yeshiva University

Antonia Pantoja
Founder of ASPIRA
Executive Director
"Adelante Boricuas"

José A. Cárdenas
Director
Mexican-American Education
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
Austin, Texas

THE POTENTIAL AND LIMITATIONS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR CONTINENTAL PUERTO RICAN CHILDREN

A. Bruce Gaarder:

Bilingual education is the use of two languages in the schools as mediums of instruction in any part or all of the regular curriculum, except the languages themselves. Subject matter is taught through both languages. The exception means simply that you don't teach Spanish in English, don't teach English in Spanish, and that foreign language teaching per se is not bilingual education. Constant reaffirmation of the definition is necessary because all over the country our educational hucksters and band-wagon climbers are hanging out a new sign: "Get your Bilingual Education Here!" For the most part what they offer is remedial reading in English, with sometimes a bit of hand-holding by a Spanish-, or Navajo-, or French-speaking "paraprofessional" drawn from what they call the "indigenous" group. With maybe a glass of milk on the side.

Let us review briefly the rationale of bilingual education. In that rationale is implied the truly limitless potential of this kind of schooling in our times. There are five reasons which support it: three applicable to the child, the fourth when he becomes a man, the fifth not a personal but a national concern.

1. Children who enter school with less competence in English than monolingual English-speaking children will probably become retarded in their school work to the extent of their deficiency in English, if English is the sole medium of instruction. On the other hand, the bilingual child's conceptual development and acquisition of other experience and information could proceed at a normal rate if the mother tongue were used as an alternate medium of instruction. Retardation is not likely if there is only one or very few non-English-speaking children in an entire school. It is almost inevitable if the non-English language is spoken by large groups of children.

2. Non-English-speaking children come from non-English-speaking homes. The use of the child's mother tongue by some of the teachers and as a school language is necessary if there is to be a strong, mutually-reinforcing relationship between the home and the school.

3. Language is the most important exteriorization or manifestation of the self, of the human personality. If the school, the all-powerful school, rejects the mother tongue of an entire group of children, it can be expected to affect seriously and adversely those children's concept of their parents, their homes, and of themselves.

4. If the bilingual person has not achieved reasonable literacy in his mother tongue – the ability to read, write, and speak it accurately – it will be virtually useless to him as an adult for any technical or professional work where language matters. Thus, his unique potential career advantage, his bilingualism, will have been destroyed.

5. Our people's native competence in Spanish and French and Czech and all the other languages and the cultural heritage each language transmits are a national resource that we need badly and must conserve by every reasonable means.

Promise of Bilingual Education

Perhaps the basic idea is that a distinction can well be made between the content of education (information, concept development, etc.) and the linguistic vehicle of education. I am saying that a language is a window on the world, that it's all the same world so far as school children are concerned, and that if you can't see well through one window there's always the other; and that for adults two windows on the world are better than one.

So the potential of bilingual schooling is unlimited. Bilingual schooling for self- and parent-selected Puerto Rican children from pre-school through the twelfth grade. Taught by English-medium teachers highly educated through English, and Spanish-medium teachers from Puerto Rico highly educated through Spanish. Sympathetic, respectful treatment of Puerto Rican history and culture along with that of the rest of Spanish America and the United States. Instruction in Spanish and English in any subject for adults who wish it. Finally, do not overlook the fact that in one important respect Spanish is a far better language than English for primary school use. This is so because the writing system of Spahish corresponds very closely to the sound system. Spanish-speaking children can learn to read their language much earlier, easier and faster than English-speaking children can learn to read English. In Spanish-speaking countries there are no reading problems of the kind we have here. Wouldn't it be ironic for little Puerto Ricans to have an advantage in school over other children!

But there are other limitations, severe limitations to all of this. Not limitations on the potential of bilingual education or on the potential of the Puerto Rican child. First, there is a limit to the extent to which the Puerto Rican child's problem is a language problem at all. A wise man has stated the matter in terms of "linguistic repertories" and "societal roles."* On one side is the list or ladder of the repertories, all the ways that people talk and write. On the other side is the list or ladder of the roles (jobs, positions) people fill in society. The simplistic theory has been that if the child speaker of a non-standard variant of English can be taught to speak in a way corresponding to a given societal role he will then have easy (easier?) access to that role. Joshua A. Fishman has made the disconcerting suggestion that if the child truly had access to that role and knew it, there might be little need to "teach" him the corresponding language. In other words, if the child were fully aware of the role and had full confidence (along with his parents) that it is within the realm of his expectations, the teaching problem would tend to disappear. In still other words, in a major sense "language disability" is not the malaise. It is only the major schoolroom symptom.

There is also the limitation of the ability of children – any and all children – to learn and of teachers to teach in situations where there is not a strong, mutually-supportive relationship between the school system and the sub-society represented by the children and their parents. As background for a flat, disturbing statement to come later I ask you to think of each child as being educated (in the broadest sense) by three agencies: the school, the sub-society of which he is a member, and the larger society, the nation as a whole. The flat, disturbing fact seems to be that although the school is the major formal educator, it is heavily outweighed in over-all influence by the other two agencies, and particularly outweighed by the influence of the child's own sub-society. Stated from another point of view we would say that schools traditionally have taken far too much credit for their part in the education of children, and currently are receiving and accepting too much blame when children do not become educated.

Children

The view taken here is the fundamental one that there's nothing wrong with children. With a child, yes; with an entire sub-society of children, no. Therefore, while bearing fully in mind that this is no either-or dichotomy, the implication calls for massive modification and adaptation of the educative system to make it fit the child.

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*Joshua A. Fishman, Research Planning Conference on Language Development in Disadvantaged Children, June 7-8, 1966. New York: Yeshiva University, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York City. Pp. 114-116

The second implication of the thesis concerns community involvement. Educative power – the power to educate its children – grows out of and grows with the community and sub-society. It seems clear, therefore, that the sub-society must be responsible for determining policy and must have control – fiscal, administrative, and pedagogical – of its children's schools.

We have glanced at the education of continental Puerto Rican children in two contexts: the narrow context of the school alone, and the larger context of the Puerto Rican sub-society. Middle-class mainstream America cannot substitute via TV and advertising for a child's own sub-society as the major source of that child's strength and growth, the major educative force in the child's life. If the sub-society is to give strength, it must be strong. Bilingual schooling cannot cure all of the ills of education for continental, urban Puerto Rican children, but it is the most promising, the most radically generous innovation in American education. Promising, because it releases both pupils and teachers from the severe restriction of exclusive dependence on English, and releases each child to develop his full potential on the basis of what he is rather than on what outsiders think he ought to be or accuse him of being. Radically generous, because language and life are forever entwined, and support of Spanish as one of the languages of the schools is at the same time powerful support of the Puerto Rican sub-society. It is generous recognition, as one member of Congress said in connection with the Bilingual Education Act, that the country need "...no longer be thought of...as a melting pot, which tends to homogenize all the various elements, but instead as a mosaic which gains its beauty and strength from variety and diversity."*

* * *

The Discussion

Mrs. Blanca Cedeño, President of the Puerto Rican Forum and moderator of the panel discussion asked Francis Keppel, former U.S. Commissioner of Education and now president of the General Learning Corporation, to be the first to react to Bruce Gaarder's address on bilingualism. Mr. Keppel in his remarks announced a complementary theme – parent participation and political action – which was to share the center of the session's attention with the issue of bilingualism. Mr. Keppel began by asserting that the single greatest factor in releasing the energies of the parents of urban schoolchildren would be the broadest dissemination of information about the failures of the public school systems. In this regard, he recalled the original title of the document that had done much to mobilize parents of poor children in New York, the so-called Bundy Plan, which called for the decentralization of the schools. "Decentralization," said Mr. Keppel, "is not the main point; the main point is in the title: 'Reconnection for Learning'." He concluded, "This is a step that damn well better be taken."

Miss Antonia Pantoja then rose to speak movingly and eloquently of the goals and methods of ASPIRA, which she had founded. "The adolescent," she said, "had to make peace with his own community, with his own family. If you try to break the kid off from the roots he grew from, he will be damaged forever." It was this truth on which ASPIRA had been based. The organization attempted to teach acceptance of, and pride in being Puerto Rican: "No trying to hide it; no trying to run away from it."

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*House of Representatives Report No. 915 on the Bilingual Education Act. November 13, 1967. U.S. Government Printing Office, p. 2

To those who accused her of preaching separatism, anti-Americanism she replied, "To hell with that. These are the same people who think that somehow segregation is OK because it is imposed from without, but separation is all wrong when it is sought within."

"I have to be at peace with myself," she declared, "before I can become part of the whole." But the whole message of the school system has been, "Don't speak Spanish," and every other kind of effort has been made to root out the sources of strength and pride that Puerto Rican children bring with them to school. She urged that the community rally around their language, and certainly not be put off by those academics who say that even this is flawed, that it's not Spanish but Puerto Rican. Miss Pantoja ended by condemning the dominant institutions of the society for their lack of fundamental respect for the Puerto Rican and said that this, more than anything else, prevented parents from full participation in the schools.

Professor Frank Cordasco of Montclair State College in New Jersey, who was the next speaker, passionately denounced the whole thrust of public education in the United States, calling it "an assault on identity, an atrocity." Where is the Puerto Rican identity in the schools? Professor Cordasco wanted to know. And he answered his own question: "It is dead, murdered. And where are all the other identities of the past? Killed by the system." Passionately, he called on the Puerto Rican community to strike for power within the schools. "There must be complete enfranchisement of parents, of the poor," he cried; and he urged everyone to support the parents of Ocean Hill-Brownsville who are contending for a right to participate in the decisions affecting the lives of their own children. Only by doing what these parents were doing could we hope to reverse the tendency of society to deny to the poor even those few entry points in the opportunity structure that used to be opened to them. "The poor can no longer accept residual success," Professor Cordasco affirmed.

Mr. José A. Cárdenas, Director of Mexican-American Education at the S-W Educational Development Laboratory, spoke briefly to the issue of bilingualism in the schools. He noted that the amount of federal moneys alloted for this effort were "less than a drop in the bucket." Moreover, he said that since the total $5 million had to come from a truly bewildering array of no less than 13 separate agencies, the success of the total program may depend less on its inherent virtues than the ability of those concerned to write proposals.

Professor Joshua A. Fishman of Yeshiva University tried in his remarks to link the two themes of bilingual education and political action. He began by observing that the two most difficult skills learned by the child were walking and talking. Therefore, we have much to be grateful for, he said, one had only to think what a mess mankind would be in if these skills were taught in the schools. He followed this with an old Talmudic tale which he said had considerable relevance to the topic at hand. According to this story, each child in his mother's womb is all-wise, but then when he is born an angel comes to each of us and flicks us on the nose. And with that little flick of the angel's finger we un-learn all that we know and must be taught everything over again. In that metaphoric sense, then, the Puerto Rican child was born with more, much more, than the schools are prepared to know of, still less to use. Most centrally, Fishman said, they have the Spanish language, and this means the possibility of a truly bilingual education. But he warned that "only a bilingual education of a very high quality can overcome the damage done by the English speaking schools." It was not a program that could be "huckstered;" it must reach down into the community itself. "The people," he said, "must know about it, and they must really want it." If this happens, Professor Fishman predicted that then the bilingual program would safeguard the potential within the Puerto Rican population of the U.S. to become co-creators of Hispanic culture. For, interpreting Gaarder's earlier remarks, he said that bilingualism really means "biliteracy." To the criticism that children schooled bilingually might never know sufficient English, Fishman answered that "if this becomes a really open society, then the Puerto Rican won't be able to avoid learning English." In concluding, Professor Fishman urged the audience to regard the Bilingual Education Act as an opportunity that they must make the most of. "Don't trivialize it," he said.

The discussion from the floor that followed these statements also tended to swing between the two poles of political action and the need for bilingualism. Mrs. Evelina Antonnetti, a Puerto Rican parent leader of the movement for community control of the schools asked, in Spanish, that Miss Pantoja and her allies swing behind the militants' demands for the appointment of more Spanish-speaking young people as aides in the public schools. Mr. Louis Mercado, a young Puerto Rican teacher, also called on Miss Pantoja to put the question of supporting the Ocean Hill-Brownsville parents to the plenary session for a vote. Miss Pantoja seconded Mrs. Antonetti's demands, but pointed out to her other questioner that she thought the issue of support for the Brooklyn parents was irrelevant to the purposes of this meeting. She supported these parents, she said, but she hadn't been called to speak on this topic here.

Another questioner demanded to know why so little has been said of the good things that the Board of Education had been doing in the schools. Miss Pantoja answered this one too, saying that she knew all about the good teachers in the system, but that they didn't need discussion, they needed only to be left alone to do what they knew how to do. She chided the questioner, whom she seemed to know personally, for being afraid of the passion that had been expressed by some of the speakers, notably Professor Cordasco. She said that America was in a crisis of self-destruction, but that the proper response to this was not defensiveness, and certainly not guns. "If you don't help our children," she declared, "then there will be revolution. But if that happens, it will mean simply that we will have all given up."

A member of the audience wanted to know whether it was the sense of the conference that the first step to reform should be the training and appointment of more bilingual teachers. Professor Cordasco was asked to reply and did so, reminding the audience that "you can't build a system and then license people out of it," which is what the public schools have suceeded in doing. He argued that the first order of business should be to "let the people in from the community," and he reiterated his earlier demand for "participative control."

Mr. Cárdenas, addressing the question of recruiting bilingual teachers, mentioned a program in the southwest which, he said, had achieved remarkable results. Young adults, some of whom may not even have earned academic diplomas, have been hired straight from the Barrios and placed on the first leg of a career line at the end of which they will be fully accredited teachers. Mr. Cárdenas said enthusiasm for the program was enormous, and the dropout rate was practically nil.

Two panelists, Miss Pantoja and Mr. Gaarder, warned again of how easily the program of bilingual education could be diluted to meaninglessness. Miss Pantoja recalled that "assistant teachers," in the nomenclature of the Board of Education, were not real teachers. Mr. Gaarder seconded this and said, "You can't let them pass off handholders as bilingual teachers. The teachers in this program will have to be highly educated in Spanish and highly educated in English." He concluded by urging the audience to create a real demand for bilingualism in the Puerto Rican community.

The last three speakers were most insistent on this point: that the reform of education required enormous and sustained political pressure from the community if it was to be effected. Mr. Keppel spoke from his experience at the U.S. Office of Education when he told the gathering to seek out political allies for their programs. And Professor Fishman reminded them that the Bilingual Education Act had been the work of thousands of people. Now the community itself would have to "learn the Act backwards and forwards in order to implement it" because the movement was now at the stage where concerted pressure had to be brought to bear on principals, district supervisors, and others in educational administration. And finally, Carmen Dinos, said that she had some 335 Spanish speaking teachers in training here in New York. "The funds are there," she said, "but we need your help. These teachers still have to pass the English requirements. They need the support of the community."

SUMMARY AND FAREWELL

by Frank Bonilla

"This is an effort to pull together the ideas, the main experiences and feelings that have come out in the course of our meetings, and not a blow by blow account of our many discussions.

The conference opened with a very powerful indictment of the school system. However, the discussions at the last plenary session went far beyond that initial indictment in terms of detail, in terms of intensity of feeling, in terms of the unequivocal assigning of responsibility to particular conditions and people within the system. It may be that the Margolis Report is not a fully documented scientific study or diagnosis of the school situation as it affects Puerto Rican children. But I believe that its basic outlines cannot be challenged, and have been generally acknowledged by all concerned here to be factual. This means that our school systems are a disastrous failure; it also means that this failure affects Puerto Rican children more harshly, perhaps, than any others in the schools. For our needs are special and go beyond simple notions of equality of education, so that weaknesses in the system set us back more than any other group.

I think that it's important, therefore, that the educators who have been present at these meetings (and I hope that most of them are still here) clearly understand the main message of this meeting. When an institution fails in a function that is so vital to a people, the consequences are very grave. When mass support and confidence in an institution is withdrawn, it's too late to talk about decentralization, because decentralization is already at a maximum. It is too late then to take refuge in vague ideals, in professionalism, in expertness, or in authority, because what is at issue is the legitimacy of institutions and of organizations and the lives of children who have only one small space in time in which to be educated, or not to be educated. Once things have gone this far, it is easy to see how quickly one approaches the moment when one is told that the educational problem is really a police problem to be solved by cracking the hands of a few parents, or even children, if they insist in getting in the way. So I say to the educators here, that I would hope that some of the urgency, the profound feeling, and determination that motivates Puerto Ricans here have been communicated to you. I would hope that our capacity to confront these problems in all their complexity, to search with you realistically for solutions, and to accept responsibility in this enterprise, has also been made manifest. We are not trying to destroy either you or the schools, but we are determined to elicit some meaningful action.

We began then defining the major dimensions of the problem. The first of these is our conviction of a need for genuinely bilingual education, and our recognition that this goes substantially beyond the idea of equal educational opportunity, and constitutes a totally new challenge to American education. Second, we affirmed that we recognize the need to see our problem within the general context within which it is embedded; that is, within the larger context of racially and class segregated schooling of low quality. Thirdly, we wanted to make clear our awareness of the great difficulties in changing school systems, our recognition that these are among the institutions most resistant to innovation, and they can only be changed by a substantial mobilization of power, will, and resources. We were reminded by our Mexican-American friends, that, though regionally distinct, our educational problems are identical with their own, and that to the extent that solutions rest on action and money from the federal government, a joint effort on the problems of educating Spanish-speaking Americans throughout the nation, rather than fragmented local activities, would be an ideal goal. Some practical steps in this direction have been taken here.

Borough President Badillo reminded us of the political need not only to ally ourselves with other minorities that share our problems, but to convince and muster support on a broader scale. Several of the educators present, offered reassurances that fresh perspectives on these problems are being taken from within. Chancellor Bowker, specifically accepted the proposition that each school level should take the entire age group within its range as a referent, rather than those delivered as ready to be taught from the next lower level. He also said that ability and motivation should count for more than spotless credentials at each transition point within the school career. At lunch, we were told, with considerable candor, that the schools are now more disposed to teach our children, where they are, and the way they are, rather than to lament the many ways in which they differ from the imaginary children schools of education prepare the teacher to meet. Commissioner Allen, this morning, also gave assurances that the distance between the "saying" and the "doing" will be narrowed within the next few years. Numerous steps toward a more realistic interpretation in policy of the idea of equality in opportunity, were noted. However, he was frank in pointing out remaining barriers of apathy, resistance, and prejudice. In particular, he expressed concern over the reluctance in the Legislature to vote a decentralization plan, accompanied by a statutory delegation of powers, and a genuine deployment of control over resources.

Most of the remaining work was done in workshops, which is reviewed elsewhere. At the noon-time session on bilingualism, most of the propositions that were stated very early in the Conference, were strongly underscored by this afternoon's speakers. I would merely like to repeat two points that I think bear repetition. The first of these is that the commitment to bilinguality that we make here today is a political choice; it is a choice that does not require research support or data support in itself. It is something that we must desire, something that we must want or not want, something that we must choose, and that has to do with whether we desire to live as a community, or whether we will accept our own extinction as a goal. The second idea mentioned this afternoon, that I believe to be of considerable importance, is the social context of bilingual learning, that is, the need for a cultural infra-structure in Spanish. We must have more exercises in which we deliberately cultivate the use of Spanish, especially among our young, as a language in which more than everyday pleasantries are transacted. If Spanish dies out among us, or remains at a very primary level, it will be because we don't have an adequate framework for carrying on genuinely vital and significant activities that require and build on the use of Spanish.

In closing, I am happy to say that from my own experience, this is the first time in a conference such as this that we have not been locked up for a day or two, merely commiserating with each other about our troubles. We have, I believe, advanced substantially toward a clearer definition of our problems and our goals. We have placed these very forcibly and very clearly before important educational officials from the whole nation. We have called Puerto Ricans from many communities together and made them feel our unity, our capacity to help one another, our continuing connection with one another wherever we may be. We have made a public reaffirmation of our willingness, disposition, and active desire to find a more effective common ground for action with our black brothers. We have established some practical links with Mexican-Americans who share our cultural and educational problems, and we have heard for the first time, at least in my experience, an independent new voice, that of our own youth, making a very affirmative commitment of its own desire to figure in the defense and strengthening of this community. I submit to all of you that these are not trivial accomplishments. And because they are not trivial, and with the permission of those here who do not speak Spanish: "No puedo dejar de decir que por fin, en una conferencia como esta, encuentro con toda sinceridad que es justo que nos felicitemos. Hemos trabajado bien. Thank you all".

CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations which came out of the workshops have been combined and listed according to major categories. Participants in the Conference agreed that the true test of the value of these recommendations will be the extent to which they generate positive action. To this end, specific targets for action requests are suggested:

a. NYC Board of Education
b. NY State Education Department
c. US Office of Education
d. Private Agencies
e. Foundations
f. Mayor's Office
g. War on Poverty Agencies
h. NYC Board of Higher Education

New York City and State agencies are named with the understanding that groups in other locales and states will need to identify their own appropriate targets.

I. TO INCREASE AND UPGRADE PUERTO RICAN AND BILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATORS:

a. Examine and change teacher certification standards to reflect real needs and competencies. (b)
b. Re-examine job descriptions and tables of organization to make it possible for more minority people to enter teaching at a full professional level and advance to administrative levels. (a, b)
c. Involve teacher training institutions, especially public universities, with retraining and recruiting programs for bilingual personnel. (b, h)
d. Examine potential for increasing recruitment of teachers in Puerto Rico. (a, b, h)
e. Examine possibilities for supplementing present guidance system with outside, non-profit agencies focused on problems of Spanish-speaking students. (a, d)
f. Establish effective liaison with organizations such as United Federation of Teachers and National Education Association to encourage development of policies sympathetic to these goals. (d)

II. TO IMPROVE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

a. Work out concrete programs for communication on an equal footing between Spanish-speaking parents and schools. (a, b, d, e)
b. Utilize parents and community leaders in as many school capacities (such as guidance, vocational instruction, etc.) as possible in order to share educational tasks and deepen mutual understanding. (a)
c. In workshops and through other means, have parents actively participate in in-service training for teachers in the urban Puerto Rican culture. (a, b)
d. Begin now to educate the Puerto Rican community to the meaning and machinery of decentralization so that they may effectively participate in its implementation:
    1. Utilize the mass media in a planned program of education towards decentralization. (a, b, d, e)
    2. Provide bilingual materials related to all phases of decentralization. (a, b, e)

III. TO MAKE CURRICULUM RELEVANT:

a. State and City education agencies should allocate funds for the translation and distribution of materials from Puerto Rico. These materials to be relevant to the need for giving the child a sense of pride in his bilingualism and heritage. (a, b)

III. TO MAKE CURRICULUM RELEVANT: (Continued)

b. Produce new materials as needed. (a, b, c, e)
c. Produce bilingual textbooks for primary schools and wherever needed. (a, b, c)
d. Develop and fund a Puerto Rican "writers' workshop" to prepare special materials. (d, e)
e. Set up a Spanish-speaking advisory board to evaluate all present textbooks, curricula and materials. (c, d)
f. In the teaching of the Spanish language to all students, give greater emphasis to Latin-American rather than Iberian culture. (Adopt standard Latin-American pronunciation rather than the Castillian which is irrelevant and tends to stigmatize the Spanish spoken by many Americans.) (a, b, c, h)

IV. TO INCREASE PUERTO RICAN POLITICAL POWER AND COMMUNITY ACTION:

a. Develop leadership training programs through community-run organizations. (d, e)
b. Increase voter registration. (f, g)
c. Organize on both city-wide and local levels for participation in school decentralization. (d)
d. Create Puerto Rican community committees to continuously evaluate and report on public education agencies which affect them. (d, e)

V. TO STRENGTHEN ADULT EDUCATION:

a. Provide meaningful adult education at all school levels. (a, b, c, h)
b. Use educational television facilities, VHF and UHF, to bring interesting and informative programming into the lives of Puerto Ricans just as such programming is brought into the lives of English-speaking Americans. (a, b, c, e, h)
c. Prod cultural facilities such as museums and libraries to augment their services to Puerto Ricans. (d, e)
d. Develop ways of teaching English which are relevant to the culture and lives of adult Puerto Ricans. (a, b, c, e)

VI. TO PREPARE YOUTH FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION:

a. Conduct a drive, on a national scale, to sharply increase the number of Puerto Rican youngsters attaining post-secondary education through the expansion of Aspira and any similar agencies. (d, e)
b. Use all available Puerto Rican professionals to stimulate the demand among youth for post-secondary education and to act as role models. (d, e)
c. Coordinate through a private agency efforts of post-secondary institutions to recruit and provide scholarships for students to assure sensitivity to student's special needs and optimum matching of students and institutions. (d, e)
d. Review, through a panel of college officials, administrators in public education, and representatives of private agencies such as Aspira, standards for college admission and allocation proportions and recommend appropriate remedial steps to "open wider the doors" to capable but underachieving youth. (a, b, e, h)

VII. TO ACT ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL:

a. Develop among all 7.5 million Spanish-speaking Americans a single voice which can advance the case for special assistance in Washington. (d, e)

VII. TO ACT ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL: (Continued)

b. Create a central, nationwide clearing house for all educational information and materials related to bilingualism and Hispanic culture with the stress on Puerto Rico and the Western Hemisphere. (c, d, e)

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